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ABSTRACT

Extensive research over the past 30 years has established the classroom and home experiences that support independent reading by the end of third grade. This set of eight six-page pamphlets draws on this research in providing teachers with practical suggestions on improving children's reading achievement. It includes practices easily incorporated in any classroom, along with references to help teachers learn more. Along with a comprehensive Overview, eight topic areas that are fundamental to children's reading success are covered: (1) Oral Language and Reading; (2) Concepts of Print, Letter Naming, and Phonemic Awareness; (3) Phonics and Word Recognition Accuracy; (4) High-Frequency Words and Fluency; (5) Strategic Comprehension; (6) Writing and Reading; (7) Engagement and Interest in Reading; and (8) School-Wide Reading Programs. (RS)

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Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement

EVERY CHILD A READER

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Extensive research over the past 30 years has established the classroom and home experiences that support independent reading by the end of third grade. **Every Child a Reader** draws on this research in providing teachers with practical suggestions on improving children's reading achievement. Written in clear, concise language, **Every Child a Reader** includes practices easily incorporated in any classroom, along with vital references to help teachers learn more.

Along with a comprehensive Overview, eight topic areas that are fundamental to children's reading success are covered:

TOPIC 1 **ORAL LANGUAGE**
Oral Language and Reading

TOPIC 2 **EARLY CONCEPTS**
Concepts of Print, Letter Naming, and Phonemic Awareness

TOPIC 3 **PHONICS**
Phonics and Word Recognition Accuracy

TOPIC 4 **FLUENCY**
High-Frequency Words and Fluency

TOPIC 5 **STRATEGIES**
Strategic Comprehension

TOPIC 6 **WRITING**
Writing and Reading

TOPIC 7 **ENGAGEMENT**
Engagement and Interest in Reading

TOPIC 8 **SCHOOL PROGRAMS**
School-Wide Reading Programs

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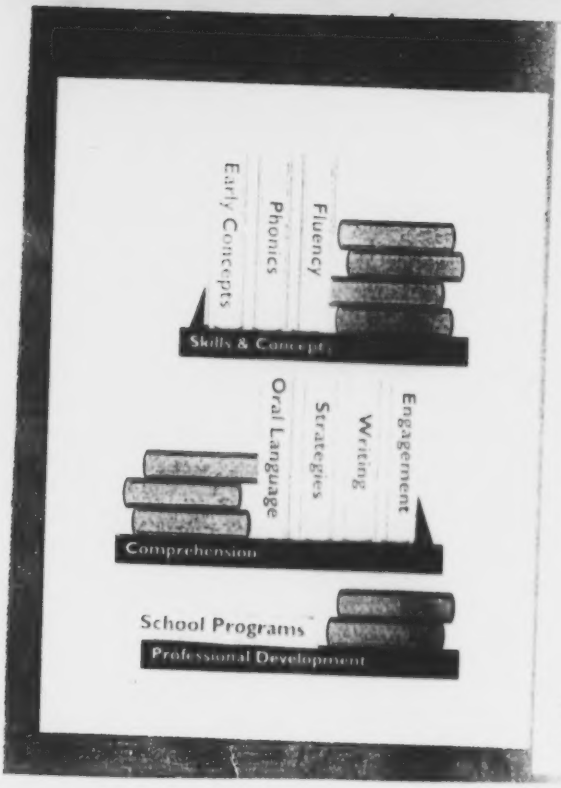

Each topic includes a library illustrating t
connections across **Every Child A Reader**

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EVERY CHILD A READER
OVERVIEW

PRIORITY 1:

All students will read independently and well by the end of 3rd grade.

President's and Secretary's Priorities,
U.S. Department of Education, 1997

Learning to read in the first several years of school is essential to success in later grades and in life.

Reading is the cornerstone of education and the foundation of lifelong learning. If children are not independent readers by the end of third grade, it is unlikely that they will be successful in the middle grades and beyond.[1] Children who are not independent readers by the end of third grade rarely "catch up" later.

Is the goal of independent reading for all third graders realistic? Actually, most American third graders can read, if reading is defined as figuring out the words on a page. But many children—perhaps as high as 40%[2]—spend so much time figuring out the words that they cannot attend fully to the message. Other students learn to say the words accurately but do not attend to what they are reading to see if it makes sense. These are the children who struggle in the middle grades when reading tasks in science, mathematics, and literature become demanding.

The national report, *Preventing Reading Difficulties*, describes the source of successful third grade reading: hard work by children, Head Start teachers, preschool teachers, primary-level teachers, and adults in children's homes and communities.

The National Academy of Sciences recently asked a panel of experts to examine existing research on reading acquisition to establish what can be done to prevent this level of reading difficulties among America's children. The panel's conclusions were summarized in a report called *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*.[3] The report is extensive, but its central message is consistent and unwavering: The vast majority of children can learn to read well.

The tasks differ along the way from preschool through the primary years, but many people collaborate in the creation of successful third-grade readers. While we would not expect children in a Head Start program to be decoding multisyllabic words in the way that second graders can, without the building blocks of Head Start—tasks such as learning letter names, becoming aware of how books work, and reading their own and their classmates' names on coatracks—second graders might not be prepared to decode multisyllabic words.

Further, while primary-level teachers may provide many appropriate experiences for developing word recognition and comprehension, they cannot do the job entirely on their own. In order for children to become the readers that our society needs, they must apply what they learn in school to everyday reading and writing at home and in their communities. Adult support at home and in the community will dramatically increase the likelihood that children will get the reading exposure they need to become successful readers. Many contribute to the creation of successful third-grade readers and this creation occurs over a long period of time.[4]

A wealth of information on the learning and teaching of early reading has accumulated over the past 30 years. Efforts to summarize this information have included *Becoming a Nation of Readers*[5] and *Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning About Print*.[6] Recent efforts have integrated ideas from the ever-expanding research such as the report commissioned by the National Academy of Sciences[7] and *Improving the Reading Achievement of America's Children*.[8] Often, however, these documents are not easily accessible for those who are most directly involved in children's reading acquisition—primary-grade teachers. *Every Child a Reader* is intended to remedy this situation by presenting research findings in a useful form for teachers, particularly those in Title I schools with many students in homes at or below the poverty level.

Although *Every Child a Reader* is aimed specifically at Title I schools, teachers and administrators in many schools and districts will find the guidelines in *Every Child a Reader* to be useful.

We focus on Title I schools because the design and implementation of reading instruction from preschool to third grade are especially critical in these schools. That focus does not mean that expectations are low or that the prognosis is poor. To the contrary, children challenged by poverty can and do learn to read well when they get good instruction and many opportunities to read and write. They should *not* be held to a lower standard. However, a significant portion of children in high-poverty schools are likely to require sustained instruction and assistance throughout the primary years. Since the intent of Title I is to provide such support for low-income children,[9] the application of ideas from the large body of knowledge on learning and instruction of early reading to Title I schools seemed most appropriate. The eight topics of *Every Child a Reader* present a comprehensive summary of the knowledge base that can make the goal of independent third-grade reading a reality for many more American children.

Why is early reading of such concern today?

- Students are being asked to handle more complex cognitive tasks at earlier stages in their schooling. Success in early reading is critical to successful performance on these higher order tasks.
- When students experience early reading failure, it is extremely difficult for them to catch up later.
- Recent research has many suggestions for early reading instruction. Practicing teachers and teacher educators need to learn about this work.
- A large percentage of students who live in poverty require intensive help in understanding the nature of print and how to negotiate it.

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Underlying Perspectives of *Every Child a Reader*

Reading educators have been preoccupied with the methods used to teach reading. Claims are often made that one teaching method is better than another. By summarizing the existing research on what children need to learn and how they learn it best, *Every Child a Reader* directs teachers' attention to the important processes of learning to read rather than the techniques of a single teaching method or philosophy.

Recommended practices are based on research.

A large body of knowledge about the learning and instruction of early reading has been developed through carefully conducted studies. Most of these studies took place in classrooms. *Every Child a Reader* includes references to the original studies, so they may be examined more carefully by those who wish to implement the strategies explored in the research.

Word recognition and comprehension are emphasized.

Word recognition and comprehension need to be balanced in reading instruction. A conventional view suggests that word recognition instruction is emphasized in the early elementary grades and comprehension instruction begins in the middle grades, but current research suggests that both should be taught throughout the early years.

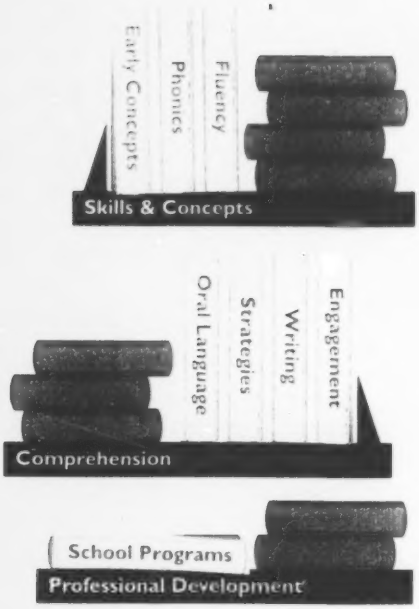
Practices cover a developmental continuum from kindergarten to third grade.

In the past, it was often assumed that early reading activities occur only in first grade. We now know that we must consider the early literacy skills and concepts that kindergartners already possess when they begin school, as well as the ways in which those skills develop from kindergarten through third grade. Further, some students need extensive follow-up in second and third grades to learn skills traditionally acquired in first grade. *Every Child a Reader* places both the expected accomplishments of students and suggested practices for teachers on a continuum from kindergarten through third grade.

Appropriate practices are suggested for struggling readers and English language learners.

Although the recommended practices of *Every Child a Reader* are aimed at preventing later reading difficulties, the need for interventions or remedial instruction for some children in second and third grades is acknowledged. Struggling readers are children who have not accomplished what most children their same age have accomplished. Struggling readers need additional time and attention; however, the form of the attention for a third grader who has not reached an accomplishment usually attained in first grade may be different than the attention for a first grader who has not achieved the same accomplishment. Similarly, English language learners require specialized attention in both reading **and** the acquisition of English language skills.

Topics of *Every Child a Reader*



The organization of a library fits the organization of this series. Like libraries where materials are organized according to topics, *Every Child a Reader* is organized by topic. Where a topic is located in a library system—or in reading instruction—does not influence a topic's importance. All of the topics are important—skills and strategies, comprehension foundations, and professional development.

Within the sections of the *Every Child a Reader* library, there are books with a range of related topics. There are other topics that could be included on each of the library's shelves—and they may be added in future issues of the CIERA research implementation series. Further, a particular volume could become a book series. But the existing library contains the basic topics necessary to the development of successful third-grade readers.

TOPIC 1
Oral Language and Reading

Children's oral language abilities are interwoven with learning to read and write. The oral language children acquire as preschoolers helps them to connect words and sounds with print. Throughout the school years, oral language is both a means whereby children learn about reading and a goal of reading instruction.

TOPIC 2
Concepts of Print, Letter Naming, and Phonemic Awareness

Two powerful predictors of first-grade reading achievement are letter-name knowledge and **phonemic awareness** (the conscious awareness of the sounds in spoken words). To apply this knowledge successfully to learning to read, children need to understand the purposes and conventions of reading and writing.

TOPIC 3
Phonics and Word Recognition Accuracy

To recognize unfamiliar words when reading, successful beginning readers use **phonics** (letter-sound associations). Phonics knowledge must be applied to unfamiliar words in reading text and requires monitoring for meaning. To prepare for middle-grade reading, children must augment phonics skills with knowledge of English morphology—meaning units such as roots, prefixes, and suffixes.

TOPIC 4
High-Frequency Words and Fluency

Proficient readers recognize the vast majority of words in texts quickly, allowing them to focus on the meaning of the text. Since approximately 300 words account for 65% of the words in texts, rapid recognition of these words during the primary grades forms the foundation of fluent reading.

TOPIC 5
Strategic Comprehension

The basic comprehension strategies that children build out of oral language skills in kindergarten and first grade become more complx in second grade and beyond. As topics and text structures become less familiar and the goal of reading shifts from understanding familiar ideas to acquiring new information,

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students must develop strategies for texts that extend beyond their own knowledge base.

TOPIC 6
Writing and Reading

Learning to write assists children in their reading; in learning to read, children also gain insights that help them as writers. But writing is more than an aid to learning to read; it is an important curricular goal. Through writing children express themselves, clarify their thinking, communicate ideas, and integrate new information into their knowledge base.

TOPIC 7
Engagement and Interest in Reading

From the earliest storybook reading with an adult and the first proudly scribbled message, children enjoy reading and writing because of the social communication and signs of cognitive competence the activities provide. The key to attaining and using literacy, even when sustained effort and attention are needed, is the sense of personal pride that children feel when they succeed.

TOPIC 8
School-Wide Reading Programs

In schools that are successful in fostering high levels of reading achievement, all adults in the school work together on the reading program, build systematic program links across the grades, accept responsibility for all children, and closely monitor students' progress.

Accomplishments for Early Reading

In order for children to be reading well by the end of third grade, their progress needs to be closely monitored during the preceding years.

Children cannot become competent readers overnight. *Every Child a Reader* uses the accomplishments from *Preventing Reading Difficulties*—statements about what children should know and be able to do that vary across grade levels—to help educators and families assess whether children are moving toward reading proficiency.

We chose to use this particular set of accomplishments rather than the standards, benchmarks, or accomplishments from other sources because *Preventing Reading Difficulties* attends directly to the accomplishments from year to year across the primary grades. In many of the frameworks of states[10] and professional organizations,[11] accomplishments for the primary period are clustered into a single group. Such a clustering provides few guidelines for teachers. For teachers to be sensitive to children's reading progress, they need accomplishments that are as rich and varied as children's learning.

Each accomplishment is assigned to a grade level, and is intended as a marker along the road to competent reading, rather than an absolute indicator of a child's success or failure as a reader. Children can follow different timelines and pathways and still be accomplished readers by the end of third grade. If it seems that a child has not attained the accomplishments appropriate to his or her grade level, teachers and parents should discuss alternative ways to nurture the child's learning, rather than become discouraged or pessimistic about the child's progress.

The accomplishments that pertain to specific topics, such as writing or comprehension, appear in Topics 1–7, and the entire set can be found in Chapter 2

of *Preventing Reading Difficulties*. Also, many states and districts have developed their own "accomplishment" frameworks, and they can be used to guide the development of local programs and monitoring systems. The general point about any of these systems is that the teachers, administrators, parents, and policyworkers responsible for reading programs should develop a comprehensive framework for program implementation.

EVERY CHILD A READER: COMPANION READINGS

Gaskins, I. (1998). There's more to teaching at-risk and delayed readers than good reading instruction. *The Reading Teacher, 51*, 534–547.

Harris, S. (1996). Bringing about change in reading instruction. *The Reading Teacher, 49*, 612–618.

NOTES

1 Juel, C. (1988). Learning to read and write: A longitudinal study of fifty-four children from first through fourth grade. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 80*, 437–447.

2 Campbell, J.R., Donahue, P.L., Reese, C.M., & Phillips, G.W. (1996). *NAEP 1994 reading report card for the nation and the states*. Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

3 Snow, C.E., Burns, M.S., & Griffin, P. (Eds.). (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

4 A booklet from *Preventing Reading Difficulties* has been prepared for family and community members and may be useful in the community outreach efforts of schools:

Snow, C.E., Burns, M.S., & Griffin, P. (Eds.). (1998). *Starting out right: A guide to promoting children's reading success*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

5 Anderson, R.C., Hiebert, E.H., Scott, J.A., & Wilkinson, I.A.G. (1984). *Becoming a nation of readers: The report of the Commission on Reading*. Champaign-Urbana, IL: Center for the Study of Reading.

6 Adams, M.J. (1990). *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

7 See note 3 above.

8 Principal investigators of the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (1998). *Improving the reading achievement of America's children: 10 research-based principles*. Ann Arbor, MI: Author.

9 Borman, G.D., & D'Agostino, J.V. (1996). Title I and student achievement: A meta-analysis of federal evaluation results. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 18*, 309–326.

10 Wixson, K.K., & Dutro, E. (1998). *Standards for primary-grade reading: An analysis of state frameworks* (CIERA Report #3-001). Ann Arbor, MI: Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement.

11 International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English (1996). *Standards for the English language arts*. Newark, DE and Urbana, IL: Author.

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Every Child a Reader: Companion Readings has been compiled by E.H. Hiebert, K. Skalitzky, & K. Tesnar and is available through CIERA (courtesy of the International Reading Association).

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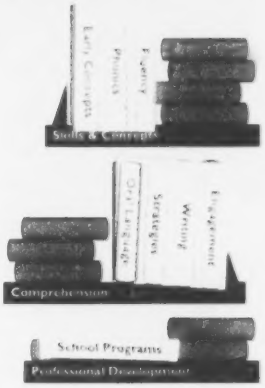
EVERY CHILD A READER

TOPIC 1

Oral Language and Reading

Children's oral language abilities are interwoven with learning to read and write. The oral language children acquire as preschoolers helps them to connect words and sounds with print. Throughout the school years, oral language is both a means whereby children learn about reading and a goal of reading instruction.



Oral language is the foundation on which reading is built, and it continues to serve this role as children develop as readers.

Children come to school with a great deal of knowledge about their oral language. They know between 3,000 and 5,000 words[1] which they comprehend aurally and can order into grammatically correct sentences to communicate.[2] They have even learned a lot about the rules that govern conversation: Listen to others when they speak, questions deserve answers, and commands deserve a response of some sort (even a refusal is a linguistically appropriate response). Most importantly, oral language—via conversations with parents, preschool teachers, and peers—is the primary tool they use to discover how their world works. The critical task for children entering school is to learn how to turn inward and reflect on ways they use their language to read and write.

Oral language serves two important roles in literacy learning.[3] First, it provides the foundation for reading and writing long before formal instruction begins. Young children's proficiency in their oral language—their sense of words and sentences, sensitivity to the sound system, and understanding of the meanings of words—influences their early attempts to read and write. Oral language provides new information about written language. It also continues to provide information about learners' understanding of print for many years, whatever their age or expertise. Through conversations, classroom discussions, and instruction, children are introduced to new ways of studying texts and new strategies for organizing the complex material they encounter as they read.

Second, children use oral language to tell us whether they understand what they read. When their understanding of a text is incomplete, oral language (in the form of discussions with teachers and peers) is a means of expanding their understanding. Through discussions, children hear other perspectives of a text, including how peers have related the text's content to knowledge about the world and personal experiences. Without this talk, an opportunity is lost to extend children's knowledge from reading.

Accomplishments for the Oral Language–Reading Connection[4]

PRESCHOOL	KINDERGARTEN	FIRST GRADE	SECOND & THIRD GRADES
• Understands the overall sequence of events in stories • Understands and follows oral directions • Connects information and events to life experiences when being read a story • Knows that it is the print that is read in stories • Pays attention to separable and repeating sounds in language (e.g., Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eater) • Uses new vocabulary and grammatical construction in own speech • Demonstrates understanding of literal meaning of stories by asking questions and making comments	• Begins to track print when listening to a familiar text being read or when re-reading own writing • Makes appropriate switches from oral to written language situations • Connects information and events in text to life and life experiences to text • Retells, re-enacts, or dramatizes stories or parts of stories	• Makes transition from emergent reading to "real" reading • Shows evidence of expanding language repertory, including increasing use of standard, formal language registers • Discusses features of stories and main ideas and prior knowledge of topics in informational texts	• Reads and comprehends stories and informational text appropriate for grade level • Participates in creative responses to texts such as discussions, dramatizations, oral presentations, and plays

This set of accomplishments, as with those in the frameworks of numerous states,[5] illustrates the integrated nature of oral and written language learning. This set of accomplishments also illustrates the manner in which children's growth as readers and writers is grounded in the oral language learning of the preschool years. Partnerships between primary-level educators and Head Start and other preschool providers are essential if children, especially those in high-poverty communities, are to enter school with the foundations in oral language necessary to attain the goal of independent reading by the end of third grade.

Instruction That Connects Oral Language and Reading: Grades K–1

Talk about the what and how of reading and writing

Oral language is the vehicle for drawing children's attention to the functions and features of written language.

Developing concepts about what reading is and about conventions of reading is critical to learning to read. For example, children must learn the movement from left to right and top to bottom (directionality) in written English and what the words "letter" and "word" mean. As teachers talk about content and fea-

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tures of print in reading and writing activities, children come to understand how reading and writing work. Without such talk, reading and writing can remain mysterious to young children, even in settings where they encounter lots of books and other printed materials.

Kindergarten and first-grade teachers have many strategies for drawing children's attention to important concepts about text.[6] Walking around the school and stopping to talk about words on doors—restrooms, offices, the cafeteria—is a useful way to orient children to the school and help them understand the role that written words play in our everyday lives. Describing the activity as "reading" when children recognize their names on cubbies and coat racks also reinforces initial reading concepts.

Shared readings of big books

Big books—books large enough for all in a group to see—have proven effective in directing children's attention to concepts such as the directionality of English print, parts of books, picture-print relationships, and connections between the sounds of oral language and the marks of written language. Books with a moderate amount of text on a page and easily discernible patterns are the best candidates for big books. A book such as *As Quick as a Cricket*[a] in which a child's attributes are presented as a simile ("I'm as quick as a cricket," "I'm as slow as a snail,") works well as a big book.

As teachers **track print** (trace their fingers under the words as they are read aloud), children learn about the association between oral and written language. Teachers initiate children into a strategic stance toward reading by asking for predictions of the story after an examination of the cover, title, and a quick visit through the book. Suggestions for books to use in these shared reading events can be found in various sources.[7]

Instruction That Connects Oral Language and Reading: Grades 2–3

Read-alouds of challenging books

Teachers often use read-aloud books with challenging content to model strategic comprehension.

Starting with the first read-aloud in kindergarten, teachers elicit and expand children's interpretations of books. As children gain reading proficiency, the object of these conversations changes from big books to regular-sized books with challenging content.[8]

Books about social studies, science, and other topics that children may not be able to read on their own are especially appropriate for conversations emphasizing comprehension. As examples, consider the Teachers' Choice awards that are given annually to books selected by a nationwide sample of teachers.

These books are likely to require a teacher's guidance if most young readers are to fully understand and appreciate them.

Teachers' Choices, 1997: Primary Level (Grades K–2)[9]

Amazon Alphabet (Martin & Tanis Jordan. Ill. Martin Jordan, 1996; Kingfisher): From agouti (a rodent) to zorro (a wild dog), each letter is depicted by an animal in its habitat in the South American rain forest.

Bill Pickett: Rodeo-Ridin' Cowboy (Andrea D. Pinkney. Ill. Brian Pinkney, 1996; Gulliver): The story of Bill Pickett traces his early life as the son of former slaves to his rise as a rodeo star, including his invention of bulldogging, which is one of seven standard rodeo events.

The Blue and the Gray (Eve Bunting. Ill. Ned Bittinger, 1996; Scholastic): This text moves between the end of the 20th century and the past as two boys, one of European descent and one of African descent, watch construction on their new homes beside a field that was the scene of a Civil War battle.

The Day Gogo Went to Vote (Elinor Batzat Sisulu. Ill. Sharon Wilson, 1996; Little, Brown): Thembi, a child in Soweto, tells the story of how her one-hundred-year-old great-grandmother, Gogo, casts her first ballot during South Africa's first democratic election in April 1994.

My House Has Stars (Megan McDonald. Ill. Peter Catalanotto, 1996; Orchard): Children from eight different locations—Alaska, Mongolia, Ghana, Japan, the Philippines, Brazil, Nepal, and the American Southwest—describe their houses, including the stars. The last frame locates the children under the same canopy of stars with their homes pinpointed on a map.

Book clubs

There are a number of different efforts—including grand conversations and book clubs—that involve children in student-led discussions of literature.

In book clubs, group members read one or more sections of the same book. Before meeting for discussion, children write their views, predictions, or preliminary answers to questions about the book in literature logs. Projects like Book Club, which was initially developed for the intermediate grades, have been adapted for primary-level students.[10] Book Club teachers facilitate dialogues by raising questions for independent reading. Stimulating questions go beyond the content to make children think about authors' perspectives, peers' reactions, and similar experiences and stories. Children's notes on the questions give structure to the discussions. With primary-level children, a "fish bowl" format can be used, in which a group conducts a discussion in the center of a circle of the whole class. Observers and participants can share and enjoy the meaning of the story, and can also discuss behaviors that support good conversation.

Though teacher guidance is essential in all phases of the Book Club, teachers must know how to shift responsibility for the discussion to the students. A second-grade teacher, for example, began by reading *Shiloh*,[b] a book with multiple chapters that most second graders were unable to comprehend independently. She provided a great deal of guidance in the initial stages but gradually involved the students in leading discussions. That early modeling and guidance paid dividends later on because it enabled the children to conduct their own Book Clubs with less complex books.

Instruction for English Language Learners

Developing literacy skills in a child's first language can foster literacy skills in English.

Learning a written form of a second language while learning to speak a new language is a demanding task. Progress in second language reading and writing is more rapid for children who have learned to read and write in their first language. In schools where many first languages are represented or teachers are not available to teach in students' first languages, initial reading instruction must take place in English. In those situations, top priority should be to develop English language learners' oral English fluency before reading and writing instruction begins.

While English oral language development initially serves as the foundation for reading and writing, reading and writing can also support English language learners' oral fluency in English. Through shared readings of big books, English language learners attend to English vocabulary for concepts. For example, a read-along of the big book version of *Hattie and the Fox*[c] can direct children to the English names of various animals. These names might be reinforced by writing key words on the board.

Teachers in classrooms where English language learners are successful also have children respond to books in a variety of modes.[11] For example, after a choral reading of *As Quick as a Cricket*, children might take turns imitating the attributes depicted in the book—slow, strong, gentle, and shy. English language learners' reading can also be extended as they listen to audiotaped versions of the books.

Instruction for Children Who Are Struggling Readers

Readers' theater—where a play is read by different characters from a script—is an engaging activity for all children but can be particularly effective in providing struggling readers with an opportunity to witness the link between reading (the text of the play) and oral language (the way in which they perform and dramatize the script)

Occasions for talking and reading abound as children select books for readers' theater. After a group of struggling readers chose *Tikki Tikki Tembo*[d] for readers' theater, they were observed to repeatedly read parts of the story as they negotiated the treatment of scenes and characters.[12] In one session, a group member said, "We have to look in the book." Another child responded: "It's right here. 'Chang ran as fast as his legs could carry him to his mother.'"

Folk tales like *Tikki Tikki Tembo* are particularly effective for readers' theater due to their straightforward story structures and dramatic problems. Since many cultures have similar tales, struggling readers can compare several versions of a tale, such as *Lon Po Po*,[e] a Chinese version of *Little Red Riding Hood*, with the English versions. Another adaptation comes from the transformation or "fracturing" of fairy tales such as *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs!*[f] These familiar tales offer opportunities for children to hear, say, and read words in enjoyable stories that they understand.

EVERY CHILD A READER: COMPANION READINGS

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CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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This topic is part of the series *Every Child a Reader* by E.H. Hiebert, P.D. Pearson, B.M. Taylor, V. Richardson, & S.G. Paris of the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA).

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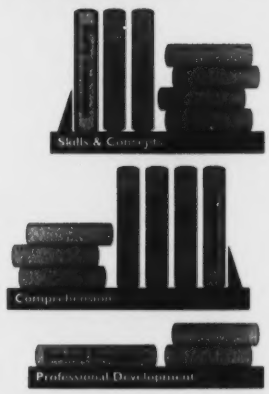
EVERY CHILD A READER

TOPIC 2

Concepts of Print, Letter Naming, and Phonemic Awareness



Two powerful predictors of first-grade reading achievement are letter-name knowledge and **phonemic awareness** (the conscious awareness of the sounds in spoken words). To apply this knowledge successfully to learning to read, children need to understand the purposes and conventions of reading and writing.

To learn to read, children need to be attentive to the purposes of written language, the distinctive features of the alphabet, and the relationship of spoken to written language.

Many children have been taught by parents and preschool teachers to recite the alphabet and even to identify rhyming words. Although this is an excellent start, children may remain confused about learning to read unless they develop fundamental concepts of print. These include knowing that print carries a message, that print represents the sounds in spoken language, and that English print has conventions such as left-right and top-bottom movement. These concepts give children the motivation to attend to small and abstract parts of writing—letters—and to the spoken sounds associated with letters.[1]

Recognizing letter names requires attention to the most distinct features of print—an essential skill for learning to read. Teachers should remember the challenge of this task for young children: There are confusing pairs of letters such as f and t, and h and n, as well as the troublesome foursome of b, d, p, and q. There are also upper- and lowercase forms of letters, two types of script (manuscript and cursive), and numerous fonts. Further, by itself a letter conveys no meaning to a child. It is only when a letter is tied to something meaningful, such as the child's name, that it becomes meaningful. Teaching young children to name letters without basing this learning in the hows and whys of reading has not produced faster or better reading acquisition.[2]

Successful first-grade readers possess fairly well-developed phonemic awareness (knowing that words, such as *cat*, can be segmented into constituent sounds of /c/ /a/ /t/).[3] This attention to **phonemes** (the unit of sound corresponding roughly to a letter) in spoken language is critical because beginning readers must be able to segment words into phonemes and blend phonemes to sound out words. Although phonemic awareness is necessary for using **phonics** (knowledge of specific letter-sound associations), phonemic awareness is not an interchangeable label for phonics. Phonemic awareness involves the awareness of and the ability to manipulate sounds, while phonics involves connecting sounds with letters.

Accomplishments for Concepts of Print, Phonemic Awareness, and Letter Naming[4]

PRESCHOOL	KINDERGARTEN	FIRST GRADE
• Knows that alphabet letters are a special type of graphics that can be individually recognized • Recognizes familiar print such as signs in the classroom • Knows that it is the print that is read in stories • Understands that different texts are used for different purposes (e.g., a list for groceries) • Attends to separable and repeating sounds in language (e.g., Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eater) • Shows interest in books • Displays reading and writing attempts (e.g.,"Look at my story.") • Identifies 10 alphabet letters, especially those from own name • "Writes" (scribbles) messages as part of playful activity • Begins to attend to beginning or rhyming sound in prominent words	• Points to print when listening to any familiar text or when rereading own writing • Recognizes and names all upper- and lowercase letters • Understands that the sequence of letters in a written word represents the sequence of sounds (phonemes) in a spoken word (alphabetic principle) • Understands that spoken words consist of a sequence of phonemes • Identifies which one is different when given spoken set (e.g., dan, dan, den) • Identifies which two share sounds from a spoken set (e.g., mac, pat, ten) • Produces a word that rhymes when given a spoken word • Counts the number of syllables in and word	• Blends or segments the phonemes of most one-syllable words • Knows many one-to-one letter-sound correspondences • Understands punctuation and book features

The accomplishments convey the expectation that young children should be prepared for beginning reading by first grade, if not earlier.

Knowledge about letters, sounds, words, and books varies considerably among the entering kindergartners in any school. Some children know only a handful of letters, while others name letters and rhyme words confidently. Typical kindergarten activities such as word wall and journal writing allow a class with varying early reading skills to acquire knowledge at different paces. While one child attends to the initial consonant of a word on the word wall, another uses the middle and ending of the word to recognize it.

Although these early concepts and skills are necessary for learning to read, they cannot be equated with learning to read. Nor can any one of these skills be viewed as sufficient by itself to learn to read. Today, phonemic awareness dominates early reading programs in the manner that letter naming did in previous generations because it is associated with successful first-grade reading. At the same time, the vast majority of children acquire phonemic awareness whether or not it is explicitly taught to them. Further, the integration of phonemic awareness with knowledge of letter names in order to decode unknown words in texts is the ultimate goal, not proficiency on subskills of early reading concepts and skills.[5]

Instruction That Promotes Early Concepts and Skills

Consistent talk

Through consistent classroom conversations, children come to attend to the functions and features of print in books and on signs.

Consistent talk about the presence and functions of written language occurs in kindergarten classrooms where children who have few concepts of print become prepared for reading. Many common events in early childhood classrooms can be occasions for discussions about written words.

- Morning message allows children to see written records of personally important news: "I lost a tooth last night," or "My aunt's having a baby."
- Signs that communicate classroom rules such as "Only Three in the Library Center" provide occasions for using print as a part of "everyday" life.
- A sign-in for beverage at snack time requires children to place their names by their choices (e.g., milk, apple juice).

An important ingredient of these events is the talk about print.[6] As teachers read from big books and charts, they talk with children about letters, words, and sentences. Big books and charts provide occasions for teachers to demonstrate oral and written language associations through **tracking** (tracing a finger under the words as they are read) and to reinforce the **directionality** (left to right and top to bottom) of written English. In first grade, teachers refer to letters, words, and sentences as they teach reading and it is crucial that children understand these terms.

Word walls

Word walls and journal writing foster letter naming and concepts of print.

Word walls have many uses in primary classrooms, the first of which is to establish a focus group of words for particular letters in kindergarten classrooms.[7] Words such as *Hallie, hamster,* and *hamburger* might be clustered under the letters *H, h,* while *Caitlin, Curious George, crayons,* and *cookies* appear below *C, c.* As these examples show, the sources for these words are children's names and those of characters in books and words from the classroom, cartoons, and traffic signs. The focus letters of word walls change over a kindergarten year. Letters do not need to be presented in their consecutive order in the alphabet, and unknown letters can be introduced alongside known letters as children learn new letter names.

Journal writing and shared writing

Journal writing is a common classroom activity that begins in kindergarten.[8] Some kindergartners may write their first messages with letters made out of plastic, foam, and sandpaper due to unfamiliarity with letters. Children who can form letters may choose to draw pictures in their journals or pretend to write with a wavy line. With teachers' encouragement, children begin to write words (often the first letter of the word), phrases, or sentences.

Shared writing—a joint venture of teacher and students—assists children in attending to letters as the group writes a story. As children take turns serving as the scribe for the group's message, they can use words from the word wall and can apply their letter-sound knowledge.

Shared reading

Instruction promoting phonemic awareness engages children in hearing, segmenting, and blending the sounds in words.

Shared reading is common in primary grades and can be connected to shared writing if children read the stories the group writes. Read-alouds in kindergarten involve many kinds of books. Some of the most enjoyable read-alouds occur with texts that focus on alliteration and rhyming.

Read-Aloud Books for Developing Phonemic Awareness

- *Faint frogs feeling feverish and other terrifically tantalizing tongue twisters* (Obligado, L., 1983). Each letter of the alphabet is presented in an alliterative statement. The text for s is: "smiling snakes sipping strawberry sodas, a shy spider spinning, and a swordfish sawing."
- *Alphabears* (Hague, K., 1984). Alliteration is used to introduce each letter of the alphabet. For example, Pam (a teddy bear) likes popcorn and pink lemonade, while another teddy bear, John, loves jam and jelly.
- *Oh, a-hunting we will go* (Langstaff, J., 1974). The traditional rhyme is adapted to include a brontosaurus who is put in a chorus; an armadillo who is put in a pillow.
- *The listening walk* (Showers, P., 1991). A girl takes a walk with her father and dog, and they hear many sounds, including "bik bok bik bok" (the sounds of high heels on the pavement).

Reading and rereading books like these and reciting favorite lines promotes phonemic awareness. Marching and clapping in time to the rhymes draws children's attention to distinct syllables. These rhymes become part of the classroom's language. As children form a line, the teacher chants, "Oh, a-lunching we will go, a-lunching we will go, we'll get some bread and eat it 'til we're fed, a-lunching we will go."

Language games

Language games such as those where a puppet speaks in an exaggerated way, stretching the sounds in words, are effective in increasing phonemic awareness.[10] This stretching of sounds shows children how to segment sounds—part of successful phonics analysis. Sometimes, the puppet talks only with the sounds elongated and the children need to "put the sounds together"—the blending required for reading unknown words.

Letter-sound matching

Phonemic awareness is most effective when it is integrated with letter-sound instruction.

Writing allows phonemic awareness and letter-sound recognition to develop hand-in-hand because it requires children to represent the sounds they hear concretely with letters. Many occasions for seeing the letters associated with

phonemes, including sandpaper letters that children trace while they say the associated sound, occur in effective kindergartens.

At the same time, teachers should encourage children to form letters themselves with felt markers and pencils. This requires that children attend to the distinctiveness of letters. Teacher dictation of short sentences that include words with particular letter-sound correspondences provides children an occasion for applying what they have learned, both about phonemic awareness and letter-sound correspondences. After reading a book with the repetitive line "The cat sat on the mat," a target sentence might be "The cat sat."

Instruction for English Language Learners

Teachers need to balance a sensitivity to the demands placed on English language learners when acquiring early reading concepts and skills with high expectations, knowing that most children will learn to read well by the end of the primary grades if involved in consistent and well-designed instruction.

English language learners and children who speak a vernacular dialect of English present challenges to our reading programs. The linguistic issues are not trivial, nor should they be disregarded. However, neither should we believe that English language learners cannot learn well or on a reasonable time line. English language learners respond well to meaningful activities such as language games and word walls, especially when the activities are consistent and focus on particular sounds and letters.

Songs and poems that are easily memorized can be used to teach phonemic awareness and print concepts to English language learners. While listening to children chant jump rope rhymes on the playground, an educator heard children segmenting and blending words. But in their reading lessons, they weren't using this knowledge. When rhymes such as "Miss Mary Mack, Mack, Mack, dressed in black, black, black" were presented on charts, books, and computers, children could apply their blending and segmenting skills to the task of beginning reading.[11]

Instruction for Children Who Struggle With Early Concepts and Skills

Although first-grade interventions are necessary for some children, the best intervention is well-designed kindergarten instruction.

There are first graders who require intensive support from a qualified teacher if they are to be successful in beginning reading instruction.[12] These interventions, described in Topic 8, should occur early in first grade, consist of concentrated and consistent sessions, and provide a teacher-student ratio that permits high levels of teacher attention and feedback to individual children.

These first-grade interventions need to be preceded with focused, well-implemented kindergarten instruction. Such kindergarten instruction can substantially increase the number of children who are prepared for first-grade reading, especially in high-poverty schools.[13] Successful kindergarten programs include the components presented in this pamphlet—shared reading, journal and shared writing, and language games.

Such special intervention projects over the primary grades must be shared with children's families and communities, including the provision of materials for summer activities. School support of reading at home during the summer ensures that the gains made in a school year are maintained. Schools can distribute the reading lists and idea books that are available from various organizations.[14]

EVERY CHILD A READER: COMPANION READINGS

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This topic is part of the series *Every Child a Reader* by E.H. Hiebert, P.D. Pearson, B.M. Taylor, V. Richardson, & S.G. Paris of the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA).

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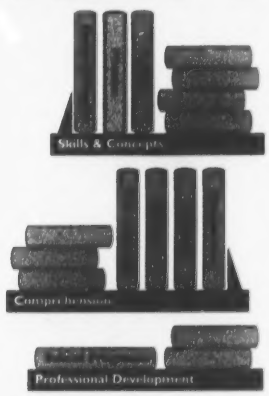
TOPIC 3

Phonics and Word Recognition Accuracy



To recognize unfamiliar words when reading, successful beginning readers use **phonics** (letter-sound associations). Phonics knowledge must be applied to unfamiliar words in reading text and requires monitoring for meaning. To prepare for middle-grade reading, children must augment phonics skills with knowledge of English morphology —meaning units such as roots, prefixes, and suffixes.

Phonic analysis involves applying letter-sound associations to unknown words in text.

Phonics helps young readers develop approximate pronunciations of unknown words. Simply using sounds to come up with the pronunciation of a word is not enough; they must check their pronunciation against the text and their own experience to see whether it makes sense. Good reading, even at the beginning levels, means attending to whether that particular word makes sense in the sentence or phrase.[1]

As children move through the primary grades, they need to become swift and accurate at associating letters with sounds. They also need to focus increasingly on larger units, moving from individual letter-sound associations to groups of letters that share a consistent form and pronunciation. These units, variously labeled phonograms, word families, or rimes, are exemplified by the "ed" in *bed, red, Ted,* and *sled* (but not *bread*) or the "oat" in *coat, boat,* and *gloat.* There are also meaning units that change the meaning of words (consisting of prefixes such as *pre-, un-,* and *dis-* and suffixes such as *-ful* and *-able*) which children need to recognize by the end of the primary grades.

During first grade, children go through stages in using letter-sound knowledge to recognize unfamiliar words.

For most children, much of the growth in phonics knowledge and application occurs during first grade. Beginning first graders' use of phonics is often limited to the first letters of words. For example, a child may substitute a word that begins with the same letter as the target word, such as *bug* for *bee.* Next, children move to the sequential decoding stage[2] where they produce sounds for the letters in a word in order as in /s/, /e/, /t/ for *set.* With practice, children's attention moves to phonograms.[3] Using phonograms to decode words would be evident in children's production of *sack* as /s/, /ack/, rather than /s/, /a/, /k/. By the end of second grade, many of the words in grade-appropriate texts are multisyllabic, requiring that children recognize chunks of words that share meanings—prefixes (anti-), suffixes (-ment), and roots (-spect-). The ultimate goal is for children to be reading the majority of words automatically as sight words by third grade.

Accomplishments for Phonics and Word Recognition Accuracy[4]

KINDERGARTEN	FIRST GRADE	SECOND GRADE	THIRD GRADE
• Knows many letter-sound correspondences • Begins to understand that the sequence of letters in a written word represents the sequence of sounds (phonemes) in a spoken word (alphabetic principle)	• Decodes phonetically regular, one-syllable words in texts • Monitors own reading and self-corrects when an incorrectly identified word does not fit with cues provided by the letters in the word or the context surrounding the word	• Decodes one-syllable words not yet known automatically through use of letter-sound correspondence knowledge and by recognition of phonograms or analogy to rhyming words • Decodes unknown multisyllabic words through phonic and structural analysis	• Decodes most multisyllabic words not yet known as sight words • Recognizes most words automatically

Word recognition begins in kindergarten but continues for several years. Children learn to use initial letters, then letter sequences, and later phonograms, suffixes, and prefixes as meaningful cues to words.

Instruction in Phonics and Word Recognition Accuracy

Associating letters and sounds

In kindergarten and early in first grade, classrooms abound with talk and activities that support children in associating letters and sounds.

Picture sorts allow children to use their knowledge of familiar concepts to attend to sounds in words.[5] This activity begins with attention to initial consonants and extends to word endings and vowels within words. To make the sound associations with the letters *m* and *d*, for example, a sorting activity might use pictures of a dog and a monkey as reference cards. Individually or in pairs, children take a set of pictures of objects that begin with *m* and *d* and sort them, saying, "Does d-d-dinosaur start like m-m-monkey or d-d-dog?"

In **guided writing**, the teacher models and coaches as the class writes a sentence together about an event the class has shared. In the spring of kindergarten, a class might write, "The hen ate the bread," after hearing *The Little Red Hen*, with children taking turns writing the various words in the sentence. The teacher might need to coach by asking, "What do you hear first in 'hen' and what letter is this? What do you hear next in 'hen' and what letter is this in the middle? What do you hear at the end of 'hen' and what letter is this?"

Posters or illustrations of memorable characters with alliterative names such as "Silly Snake" or "Drowsy Dinosaur" are useful in kindergarten and first-grade classrooms. Routines of the sounds made by these characters can be engaging for young children. For example, "The silly snake goes /s/ /s/," or "The drowsy dinosaur goes /d/ /d/."

Sequential decoding

Children initially apply knowledge of phonics as they move sequentially through the letters of a word.

Teacher demonstrations of how to segment and blend sounds to decode unknown words are a primary source of information for beginning readers.[6] In the fall of first grade, a teacher's reading of *Cat on the Mat*[a] might be followed by a demonstration of segmenting and blending the sounds in *cat, sat,* and *mat.* Segmenting and blending of sounds in words also occurs in classroom writing events such morning messages or guided writing.

Making words involves children in spelling words with the letter-sound patterns that are the focus of lessons.[7] Sets of letters on small cardboard squares or magnetic letters can be useful. Once children have spelled and read the initial word, letters within the key word are substituted with other letters to form new words. The reading of *The Chick and the Duckling*[b] might be followed by a request for children to pick these letters from their letter boxes: *c, d, g, k, l, n, i, u.* After spelling and reading *lid,* children change *lid* to *kid, kid* to *kick, kick* to *lick, lick* to *luck, luck* to *duck,* and *duck* to *duckling.*

Writing with phonetic spelling gives children many opportunities to practice decoding words sequentially. They often begin with the initial letter of a word they want to write and sometimes add letters derived from other prominent sounds, such as the last letter. For example, a child might write *crs* for *chairs.* A teacher can help the child segment and blend the sounds while also identifying the missing letters. Writing meaningful messages motivates children and allows teachers to assess their skill with sequential decoding.

Decoding by analogy

When children encounter new words, they can compare them to familiar words with similar letter combinations. Then they realize that "fill" must rhyme with "Bill" and that "sail", "tail", and "rail" all include the same letter-sound combinations.

Key phonograms and **key words** are parts of instructional programs in which children learn to decode unknown words by comparing them to either known phonograms (*vat* must rhyme with *at*) or known words (*vat* must be like *cat*). There are 353 different phonograms, each of which can be found in between 2 and 26 relatively common one-syllable words.[8] The point of this activity is to develop children's attention to consistent groups of letters, not to make them study all 353 phonograms. In most primary classrooms, too many phonograms are introduced and too few experiences are given in applying them to unknown words in reading and writing texts.

The following 38 phonograms appear in 600 words, with each phonogram occurring in between 14 and 26 words. A key word—usually the most common of the group (e.g. *bat* might serve for *at*)—might be chosen to represent each phonogram on a word wall or chart.

38 Phonograms in 600 Common Words[8]

	V-C/V-C-C	V-C-e/V-V-C	Diphthongs, r-controlled, others
a	at, am, ag, ack, ank, ap, an, ab	ay, ail, ain, ake	
e	ell, est, ed	eed	ew
i	ill, ip, ick, ing, in, ink, im	ine	ight
o	ot, op, ob, ock		out, ow, ore
u	unk, ug, uck, um		
y			y

If the phonics information taught in lessons does not connect to the words in the books that children read, it is unlikely that children will integrate the new information into their word recognition strategies.

Reading books with elements and words that have been taught in phonics lessons is important at every stage of learning to read. While connections between the content of lessons and the texts that children read make good sense, the question of what percentage of words should be represented by the target patterns is less certain. Recently, textbook publishers have chosen books for beginning reading programs because of their literary or predictable patterns rather than on a shared group of words.[9] Few opportunities to apply the content of phonics lessons with the words in books are likely to serve as a roadblock in developing phonics strategies, especially among children who are most at-risk of failure in reading.[10] At the same time, children enjoy texts that have engaging illustrations, patterns, and storylines. The best solution likely lies in inclusion of many different texts in beginning reading programs, including those that emphasize the phonics patterns and high-frequency words of instruction.

What there can be no doubt about is that children need to read many, many books to become good readers. One successful program reports that children who were initially struggling readers read as many as 600 books in independent and home reading programs during a single year.[11] These books were *in addition to* the texts of reading lessons.

Decoding multisyllabic words

By the second half of second grade, the focus of decoding instruction should be on multisyllabic words that children don't recognize instantly.

Key words can also be used effectively with multisyllabic words, since many of the common and consistent phonograms occur in multisyllabic words as well. Within the Benchmark program[12] (a research-based program for learning-disabled young readers), classrooms have a word wall with 120 key words, each representing a common phonogram. Children are taught to study chunks of multisyllabic words, looking for phonograms shared with the key words. When encountering the word *banter* for the first time, readers would use the key word *can* to figure out *ban* and *her* to figure out *-ter.*

Lessons also attend to recognition and meaning of common prefixes and suffixes. By removing recognizable prefixes, suffixes, and other endings (e.g., *est,*

er), children can look for familiar phonograms which they can pronounce. The most critical part of the strategy is for children to keep checking whether their conjectures for the unknown words make sense in the sentence or phrase.

Strategic use of decoding

To ensure that children apply word recognition strategies in their independent reading, teachers should consistently use an "apply it now" strategy when children are confronted with unknown words.

Reference charts summarize primary decoding strategies for unknown words, and should be posted in the classroom. Such visuals reinforce teachers' demonstrations of and conversations about strategies. A chart in one second-grade classroom listed these strategies: 1) Take off any endings to make the word shorter; 2) See if there is a phonogram you recognize and blend the beginning sound and the phonogram together; 3) If it's still not a real word, sound the word letter by letter; and 4) Check your reading: Does the word make sense in the story?

Instruction for English Language Learners

English language learners should learn to read initially in their first language. If this is not possible, they should be involved in numerous read-alouds and read-alongs of books.

When children's initial reading acquisition is in their first language, they use their knowledge about written systems in learning to read and write English. When initial reading instruction occurs in English, classrooms should involve English language learners in daily events with books. Figuring out the sound-letter associations of a new language is a challenging task. A conventional stance has been to involve English language learners with few books and require them to indicate some "mastery" of a book before moving to the next book. What these children actually need is to see and hear literally hundreds of books over a school year.[13] Reading along with more proficient readers (teachers, visitors, older students), participating in read-alouds of big books, and listening repeatedly to books read aloud can provide English language learners with the fluency in English that they need to recognize words.

Instruction for Children Who Struggle With Phonics

Struggling readers benefit from high quality, small group interventions that incorporate multiple features of strong decoding instruction.

Teachers and researchers in the Benchmark program described earlier have recently expanded their "decoding by analogy" program to incorporate sequential decoding as a first step.[14] In the earlier version, students were taught to use the key words for each phonogram as a way of approximating the pronunciation of syllables in long, multisyllabic words. In their recent work, they have dramatically improved the effectiveness of this approach by taking their students through an initial sequential decoding stage in which they learn how to segment and blend the sounds in easily decodable words. For the sequential decoding stage, a core group of phonetically regular, familiar words are the materials for comparing and contrasting critical features of similar words (*bob* and *rob* differ at the beginning but *sat* and *sad* differ at the end). Children are guided in analyzing the sounds they hear in these words and matching sounds with letters. The Benchmark staff have found that once their

students are able to fully analyze words in this way, they make rapid progress in the decoding by analogy approach to unlocking multisyllabic words. This is an example of a good program made even better by incorporating insights from recent research on the decoding process.

EVERY CHILD A READER: COMPANION READINGS

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This topic is part of the series *Every Child a Reader* by E.H. Hiebert, P.D. Pearson, B.M. Taylor, V. Richardson, & S.G. Paris of the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA).

Every Child a Reader: Companion Readings has been compiled by E.H. Hiebert, K. Skalitzky, & K. Tesnar and is available through CIERA (courtesy of the International Reading Association).

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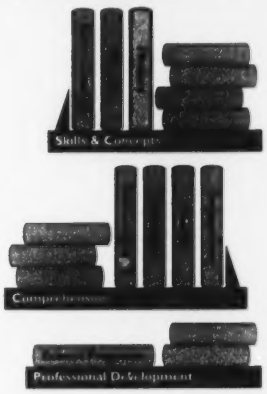
EVERY CHILD A READER

TOPIC 4

High-Frequency Words and Fluency



Proficient readers recognize the vast majority of words in texts quickly, allowing them to focus on the meaning of the text. Since approximately 300 words account for 65% of the words in texts, rapid recognition of these words during the primary grades forms the foundation of fluent reading.

> Well, I had the operation. For a long time after that, Uncle Jed came by every day to see how I was doing. I know that delayed him from opening the barbershop. — from *Uncle Jed's Barbershop*[1]

This passage, which third graders might be expected to read, fits the profile of word frequency in texts (in the table below). That is, 65% of the words in this selection are among the 300 most frequent words in English texts.[1] If by third grade children are spending as much time attending to words such as *well, the,* and *after* as they do to *operation* and *delayed*, their comprehension will be impeded.

Number of words	Percentage of words in overall texts	Examples of words from *Uncle Jed's Barbershop*
25	33%	I, the, for, a, that, to, was, from
100	50%	had, long, time, by, day, see, do(ing), how, him
300	65%	well, came, every, after, know
1,000	75%	
5,000	90%	operation, Uncle, Jed, delayed, barbershop
85,000	100%	

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Fluency refers to the ability to identify words rapidly so that attention is directed at the meaning of the text.

At the heart of independent reading is rapid recognition of a core group of words, beginning with the 25 most frequent words and extending by the end of the primary grades to the 5,000 words that account for 90% of texts.[2]

While instantaneous recognition of high-frequency words is necessary, the solution is not as simple as beginning with the 25 most frequent words, moving to the next 25, and so on. Of the first 25 words, almost half have irregular letter-sound patterns (e.g., *was* rhymes with *fuzz*, not *has*). Since these high-frequency words are "glue" words (i.e., conjunctions, prepositions, inactive verbs), young children cannot associate concrete and familiar objects with them as they can with words like *dog* or *kangaroo*. Because high-frequency words are function words, efforts to base texts solely on these words results in stilted text such as: "You can have this. I can have this. He can have this."[3]

Rapid recognition of this core group of high-frequency words is gained through extensive involvement in reading and writing. For young children, these occasions often involve oral reading where children read quickly, expressively, and with good phrasing, a process described as **fluent reading**.

Accomplishments for High-Frequency Words and Fluency[4]

KINDERGARTEN	FIRST GRADE	SECOND GRADE	THIRD GRADE
• Recognizes some words by sight, including a few very common ones (a, the, I, my, you, is, are)	• Reads aloud with accuracy and comprehension any text that is appropriately designed for the first half of grade one • Recognizes common, irregularly spelled words by sight (*have, said, where, two*)	• Reads and comprehends both fiction and nonfiction that is appropriately designed for grade level	• Reads and comprehends both fiction and nonfiction that is appropriately designed for grade level

Children who finish first grade with the ability to read end-of-first-semester first-grade text (also called **primer level**) typically can recognize the 100 highest-frequency words with ease.[5] Recognition vocabularies need to expand substantially during second and third grade, but a fundamental recognition base is expected in first grade. Some children attain primer-level reading at some point in second grade and go on to become good readers. Reports on children who do not master this core group of 100 high-frequency words until third grade and go on to become good readers are infrequent.

Instruction of High-Frequency Words and Fluency

Word walls

Word walls consist of a chart where high-frequency words currently under study are posted with those studied previously.

Children's fluency with high-frequency words reflects instruction that highlights particular words. Clusters of words from a list, such as the 100 most frequent words in written English, can be presented in lessons and activities. One effective way of presenting these words is the word wall.[6] A handful of high-frequency words is presented weekly. Each addition is mounted on the word wall, where words are categorized alphabetically by first letter.

One word wall activity is a daily warm-up where children practice new and old words by saying them quickly or writing the words. In some classes, children write the words on their own cards, adding them to their word banks along with personal words such as favorite toys or pets' names. Small-group lessons in which specific words are found and studied in books and where sentences are made with word cards will help some children to integrate high-frequency words into their recognition vocabulary. The word wall is a focal point in a classroom as children refer to the words in independent spelling and reading.

100 Most Frequent Words in Written English[7]

the	he	be	but	which	out	into	no	made	long
of	for	this	what	their	them	has	make	over	little
and	was	from	all	said	then	more	than	did	very
a	on	I	were	if	she	her	first	down	after
to	are	have	when	do	many	two	been	only	words
in	as	or	we	will	some	like	its	way	called
is	with	by	there	each	so	him	who	find	just
you	his	one	can	about	these	see	now	use	where
that	they	had	an	how	would	time	people	may	most
it	at	not	your	up	other	could	my	water	know

Selecting appropriate texts

At all times during the primary grades, children need to read books in which most of the words have been previously taught as either high-frequency words, words which the children can sequentially decode, or words with known phonograms.

Reading from appropriately difficult texts is important, but it is essential that texts give children a chance to apply the high-frequency words and phonics of lessons during early reading instruction[8] when skills and confidence are being established. Texts in beginning reading programs typically include a range of structures,[9] such as short picture books with a repetitive pattern; poems which rhyme; simple books with strong picture support; or short, decodable books which focus on either a particular vowel sound, several similar phonograms (letter(s) symbolizing sounds in speech), or a particular consonant sound.

Several principles should be kept in mind as primary teachers in a school identify sets of books and individual books for reading instruction. First, children benefit from exposure to many books rather than a handful of books that they memorize. When children see only a few books, especially when the books have a sentence or phrase that is repeated, they may memorize the text. While memorizing text can be a transitional stage to conventional reading

for many kindergartners,[10] continued use of this strategy will detract from word recognition accuracy and fluency.[11]

Second, the books that children read should be ones with which they are highly successful. Books in which children can decode about 95% of the words accurately (no more than 5 errors in 100 words) should be used in lessons where teachers guide children in word recognition strategies. If children only read books that are at their frustration level (below 90% accuracy in word recognition), they struggle too much with the words, which interferes with comprehension and reading growth.

Multiple activities for fluent reading

By increasing the amount of partner reading, independent reading, and home reading in second grade, teachers were able to bring almost all second graders in high-poverty schools to proficient reading.

For children to become fluent readers who devote their attention to the meaning of texts, many opportunities to read appropriately difficult text are needed throughout the primary grades. These opportunities must be well planned, especially when there are high numbers of potentially at-risk children in a school. An intervention for second graders in low-income schools showed that a substantial percentage of children who entered second grade as struggling readers could become proficient readers through three activities:[12]

- **Choral and partner reading** became integral parts of lessons. Teachers' lessons were redesigned to increase the amount of time that children spent reading texts under study through choral reading, followed by reading between partners. While the teacher listened to individuals read, children read in pairs with the goal of reading quickly and expressively. Partner reading is also effective during times when everyone in a class works with a partner. Routines for assisting a peer in identifying words must be established for this activity to be an effective learning experience.

- **Independent reading** from self-selected books occurred several times each week. When engaging students in this process, it is important to help students learn how to select books that are "within the range of difficulty" for independent reading. This is best handled by implementing a set of classroom strategies. First, teachers can discuss with children the importance of reading books that are "just right" for them—not too easy, not too hard. Second, teachers can teach them how to select books that are "just right." A successful approach for younger readers is to color code the books in classroom and school libraries (stickers on the spine will do) and then direct each child to the appropriate color sticker.

- **Home reading** was supported through nightly reading plans and books that traveled from school to home. These programs have proven popular and successful in supporting the progress of struggling readers. Clear guidelines and expectations, however, are essential for their success. Guidelines that answer families' questions such as "Am I supposed to just listen or should I correct mistakes when my child reads at home?" are useful. These guidelines can be in a pamphlet sent or mailed home or in the form of special classes offered for parents by the school.

Instruction for English Language Learners

Assisted reading, in which children read a text at a steady pace along with a proficient reader in person or on an audiotape, has proven highly effective in increasing the fluency of English language learners.

Several projects with children of various ages have proven that assisted reading increases fluent, independent reading.[13] Assisted reading involves the support of a proficient reader, sometimes in a tutoring or small-group setting or on an audiotape. Assisted reading can be especially effective with English language learners. Reading along with a proficient reader, whether on tape or in person, aids English language learners in the phrasing of text as well as in pronunciations of words. A program that has proven effective is one in which children take home audiotaped texts and tape recorders.[14] Opportunities for feedback and modeling of reading English have resulted in higher reading levels among English language learners.

Passages for assisted reading should contain predominantly familiar words. Further, children should be taught simple techniques for charting their own progress. One approach is to plot the number of words read correctly in a given time frame (one minute, two minutes, or the like). This sort of measure, which allows both students and teachers to examine progress on a simple measure, has been an important part of several programs that improve both student engagement and reading level.

Instruction for Children Who Are Struggling Readers

Most struggling readers read too little text to become fluent readers. Even worse, what they do read is often too difficult for them. The prospects for struggling readers improve when they are provided with opportunities to work on their fluency. Assisted and repeated readings with audiotapes and adults, partner reading, and home reading can all contribute to their fluency. These activities should occur consistently in all the primary grades, especially in second and third grades, which is a critical point in children's reading development. Many have developed into "accurate" readers, but they often lack the fluency required for successful middle-grade reading.

Reading with younger children provides occasions for involving struggling second- and third-grade readers with easy text.

Additional opportunities for increasing the fluent reading of second and third graders who are struggling readers can occur through their reading with younger children.[15] When choosing books for young children, upper-primary children need to study books from the vantage point of both interest and difficulty. In doing so, older children are rereading books that are easier for them and can be read quickly, thus giving them opportunities to develop fluency. The activity of reading to the younger child should be preceded by practicing for the event. During this practice, discussions of intonation, phrasing, and comprehension questions involve struggling readers in a close examination of these tasks, and as an added benefit, their own reading processes.

EVERY CHILD A READER: COMPANION READINGS

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This topic is part of the series *Every Child a Reader* by E.H. Hiebert, P.D. Pearson, B.M. Taylor, V. Richardson, & S.G. Paris of the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA).

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EVERY CHILD A READER

TOPIC 5

Strategic Comprehension

The basic comprehension strategies that children build out of oral language skills in kindergarten and first grade become more complex in second grade and beyond. As topics and text structures become less familiar and the goal of reading shifts from understanding familiar ideas to acquiring new information, students must develop strategies for texts that extend beyond their own knowledge base.

> Jamal, a first-grader, was reading aloud from a story in which three characters sail the ocean. Jamal, who is an excellent decoder, read the first line of text smoothly and fluently: "The three friends went to sea." However, he actually interpreted the text, "The three friends went to see." As he proceeded to read the next sentence, "The boat began to splash," he stopped, seemingly puzzled. He reread, this time more haltingly, "The three friends went to—oh, oh, sea—[they mean] water." Satisfied, he continued to read the selection.

Comprehension monitoring (thinking about what one has read) is at the heart of successful reading for beginning readers.

As Jamal begins to read, it seems to make sense. But as he proceeds, the second sentence doesn't fit with the first. Jamal demonstrates a strategic disposition by noticing the problem, then taking an action (rereading) that solves it. The problem stems from a misinterpretation of a word. It also could have resulted from difficulty with a letter-sound correspondence or an unfamiliar sentence structure. Knowing that the reading should make sense, Jamal takes an appropriate action to solve the problem. He is well on his way to becoming a strategic reader.

As the goal of reading shifts to learning from text, children need strategies for acquiring information from unfamiliar texts—texts for which they do not already have all of the relevant background knowledge. Comprehension monitoring is trickier with unfamiliar texts because readers must consider the possibility that they just don't "know" enough about the ideas to clarify confusing parts. Even so, monitoring unfamiliar text requires readers to be alert to how their interpretations match with their experiences and predictions for the text.

Jamal demonstrates this kind of monitoring; even when he determines that the three friends could go somewhere to "see" something, Jamal is thinking about what he is reading. He realizes that his interpretation, while plausible, is not the appropriate one for the story context. Jamal has learned that reading is more than getting words and ideas off of the page. He has realized that

reading requires him to find a home for those ideas within his ever-growing store of concepts. Monitoring is the tool that guides readers as they search for these homes.

Accomplishments for Strategic Comprehension[2]

KINDERGARTEN	FIRST GRADE	SECOND GRADE	THIRD GRADE
• Notices when simple sentences fail to make sense • Demonstrates familiarity with different types of text (e.g., storybooks, informational texts, poems, newspapers, everyday print such as signs and labels) • Answers questions out loud • Makes predictions based upon illustrations or portions of stories	• Self-corrects when a word does not fit with the word or textual context • Notices when difficulties are encountered in understanding text • Predicts what will happen next in stories • Discusses how, why, and what-if questions for informational texts • Talks about new information from text in own words • Writes responses to questions after reading	• Rereads sentences when meaning is not clear • Interprets information from diagrams, graphs, and charts • Recalls facts and details of text • Discusses similarities in events and characters across stories • Connects and compares information across informational texts • Asks how, why, and what-if questions about stories	• Identifies specific words or word parts that are impeding comprehension • Summarizes major points from stories and informational texts • Discusses themes of texts • Asks how, why, and what-if questions with informational texts • Distinguishes cause/effect, fact/opinion, main ideas/details of informational texts • Examines hypotheses and perspectives of text

Even though both the readers' processes and the kinds of texts encountered become increasingly complex as children move through the grades, these accomplishments underscore the importance of comprehension even at the very earliest stages of reading. At the beginning of kindergarten, children's comprehension is focused on the texts that their teachers read aloud; by the time children reach third grade, they are thinking critically and responding personally to stories and informational pieces that they read on their own.

Instruction for Strategic Comprehension: Grades K–1

Strategic talk about strategic reading

In kindergarten and first grade, teachers promote a stance of "thinking while reading" through the questions they ask about books read aloud and together.

Reading Recovery[3] provides a good model for strategic talk about reading. From the first day of instruction, Reading Recovery teachers use prompts such as those in the chart on page 3 to guide the children whom they are tutoring to apply fix-up strategies themselves. Whether children are in a tutoring, small group, or whole class context, teacher guidance with strategies such as these are appropriate. When the same set of strategies is used across settings, teachers find that children are referring to the strategies. As children become more familiar with the routine, they internalize the prompts, making

them part of their repertoires of strategies to use when things don't make sense.

Reading Recovery Prompts for Strategic Reading [3]

To encourage children's monitoring of their reading:

- "Check to see if what you read makes sense to you."

When children have made an error in their reading:

- The teacher rereads the sentence (including the error) and asks "What does that mean?" or
- "You made a mistake on that page. Can you find it?" This direction requires readers to revisit the page or sentence, rather than a single word (which happens when teachers ask children to reread words that have been misread).

When children self-correct, these responses encourage awareness of strategies:

- "I liked the way you found out what was wrong all by yourself. What did you do when your reading didn't make sense?"
- "How did you know that your reading didn't make sense?"

Experience-Text-Relationship (ETR)

ETR questions help students connect what they know to the texts they read.

ETR[4] was developed by teachers working in low-income schools as a way to engage children in stimulating discussions about their reading. The interaction begins with an *Experience* question such as, "What can you tell us about how butterflies are born?" Then it moves to *Text* questions like, "How does the boy in this story try to help the butterflies hatch?" Finally, they use *Relationship* questions—questions that bridge experience and text—such as "What did you learn about butterflies from this story?" Teachers using ETR and similar techniques have found that children develop a good sense of how to juggle the text and their own experiences in generating answers. They also find that students begin to see that texts can be used as "evidence" to support their own conclusions about big ideas like themes and characters.

Instruction for Strategic Comprehension: Grades 2–3

A review of the research[5] conducted over a 30-year period established three consistent features of instruction that promote comprehension: opportunity to read, explicit strategy instruction, and talk about text.

Just plain reading provides students with occasions to hone their comprehension strategies.

Exposure to lots of text, including children's independent reading and read-alouds by teachers, improves comprehension achievement, vocabulary growth, and learning English as a second language.[6] Several independent reading structures are common in primary grades, including DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) and SSR (Sustained Silent Reading). A few simple guidelines increase children's learning from independent reading.

- Lengths of time should vary, depending on the age of children.
- A short period of time for students to exchange ideas after the silent reading period—with a peer or two, small groups, or even the whole class—increases children's learning from independent reading.
- Books for independent reading should be easy enough for children to read rapidly and accurately while appealing to their natural interests. They have to want to read them and be able to read them. Some designation of the difficulty level of books within classroom and school libraries can be useful to guide beginning readers in choosing the right books.

Teacher-directed instruction in comprehension strategies improves children's comprehension of new texts and topics.

Teachers support their students' strategic reading through lessons that attend explicitly to how to think while reading. One program that illustrates such lessons is Informed Strategies for Learning (ISL)[7] in which teachers use metaphors to stimulate discussions. For example, a colorful poster is a reminder to "Be a Reading Detective" and a stimulus to think about clues needed to discover meaning as you read. Metaphors such as this one and class discussions make the thinking strategies concrete and sensible, make children's thinking "visible and public", and give children vocabulary terms that can be used to discuss their own comprehension.

Several projects have provided teachers with **integrated routines** (activities that orchestrate various comprehension strategies with the texts children are reading). One of the earliest of these routines, Reciprocal Teaching,[8] has been used successfully with students of all ages, consistently promoting better comprehension. In Reciprocal Teaching, children are taught to apply four strategies: (a) predicting before reading, (b) clarifying confusing parts of text, (c) asking questions about content during reading, and (d) summarizing key points after reading. Initially, the teacher manages the interactions but, over time, children assume responsibility for leading group discussions.

In another routine, dubbed Project SAIL[9] (Students Achieving Independent Learning), teachers guide children in strategies similar to Reciprocal Teaching and encourage their personal and aesthetic (not just cognitive) responses to text. In a second-grade classroom discussion of "The Mitten" (a folk tale where animals of increasing size escape a winter storm in the same mitten), the teacher began by talking about fix-up strategies when reading does not make sense. Then the teacher asked the children to imagine what it would feel like to be one of the first animals in the mitten. One child connected the predicament of the characters with her personal experience: "I have a ton of stuffed animals and sometimes I pretend I'm a rabbit at night and I'm squashed by all my stuffed animals because I have about 17 of them."

Children's comprehension of texts and topics, as well as their repertoires of strategies, grow as a result of conversations about text.

Topic 1 of *Every Child a Reader* (Oral Language and Reading) focuses on the manner in which comprehension develops through oral discussions, such as book clubs, in which children share their responses to texts. These discussions are also the occasions for children to share strategies when a text is confusing or ambiguous and to be guided in new strategies by teachers and peers.

In Questioning the Author,[10] discussions focus on queries that encourage children to grapple with their understandings of texts rather than questions that have a single, correct answer. The idea is to help students understand why authors do what they do and to give children license to be critical when they do not do it well. After this sentence was encountered in a text, "When the Polynesians settled on the Hawaiian Islands, they began to raise plants that they had brought with them," a child, Alvis, raised this query: "Why do they need to plant things when they already brought things over?" The teacher and other students interacted with Alvis, leading to the understanding that "They could run out."

Instruction for English Language Learners

English language learners can rely on their first language skills as bridges to understanding texts in their second language.

Instructional occasions can bridge English language learners' existing concepts to learning to read and write English. Children who speak Spanish as their first language can build on **cognates,**[11] words that are similar in English and Spanish (usually because of a common Latin root). For example, the Spanish verb *escribir* (to write) is closer to the Latin root *scribere* than the English word *write.* If children are guided in connecting *escribir* with a cluster of English words that share the Latin root—*scribe, script, Scripture, prescribe, describe,* and *transcribe* (all words that denote writing)—their reading of English texts will be aided. When such knowledge is ignored, the vocabulary of English texts can seem insurmountable to English language learners.

An area of attention in English language learners' strategic comprehension deals with interpretations of the figurative language often used in literature. Terms such as "crocodile tears" or "sweet tooth" are perplexing for many beginning readers but especially for English language learners, who may be working diligently to translate concepts literally. Discussions in which the literal and figurative meanings of the expressions are compared so that the logic of the figurative meaning is clear work well for English language learners.

Instruction for Children Who Continue to Struggle With Comprehension

With struggling readers, teachers may be tempted to postpone the advanced and independent aspects of comprehension until lower order skills and strategies, such as decoding and fluency, are fully in place. Nothing could be more damaging to the comprehension growth of struggling readers. Children who are struggling in reading can learn to use strategies such as self-questioning and summarizing. As a result, their comprehension performances improve.[12] All children, especially struggling readers, need good books to read.[13] Some books should challenge students to think, learn new ideas, and encounter new language. Others should offer opportunities to consolidate skills and strategies

by offering material that is within their independent range. Discussions of text are even more important for struggling readers than for more facile readers. In those interactions with teachers and peers, they see comprehension at work.

EVERY CHILD A READER: COMPANION READINGS

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This topic is part of the series *Every Child a Reader* by E.H. Hiebert, P.D. Pearson, B.M. Taylor, V. Richardson, & S.G. Paris of the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA).

Every Child a Reader: Companion Readings has been compiled by E.H. Hiebert, K. Skalitzky, & K. Tesnar and is available through CIERA (courtesy of the International Reading Association).

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EVERY CHILD A READER

TOPIC 6

Writing and Reading

Learning to write assists children in their reading; in learning to read, children also gain insights that help them as writers. But writing is more than an aid to learning to read; it is an important curricular goal. Through writing children express themselves, clarify their thinking, communicate ideas, and integrate new information into their knowledge base.

Writing is a remarkable human accomplishment. Even young children can compose a meaningful message, keeping in mind their audience and purpose, as well as the conventions of word usage, grammar, genre, spelling, and punctuation.

Young children communicate many ideas in conversations—what they want, see, feel, and think. Communicating ideas in writing requires new strategies of composing—dealing with message focus and organization, as well as conventional spelling.

When selecting topics on their own, children often compose personal narratives, such as "I went to my Grandmama's on Sunday."[1] While personal narratives remain prominent in journal writing, kindergarten and first-grade children begin to use other genres. They write predictable-pattern stories (such as variations on "The house that Jack built") and informational pieces (like records of the weather). As children enter second grade, they use genres that stretch their thinking and organizational skills. After collecting information, they summarize their findings in reports. Creating stories with new events and characters other than themselves is another priority of the primary grades.

The primary grades are an active period for children's growth in spelling. Most begin kindergarten able to spell only a few words, such as their own name. When they leave third grade, they have mastered the conventional spelling of hundreds of words. This feat is remarkable in light of the variability of sound-spelling relationships of English. Consider the fact that the sound associated with these five different underlined vowels letters is identical: ago, agent, edible, comply, and focus.

Children go through a series of stages as they progress from idiosyncratic to conventional spelling.[2] **Phonetic** or **invented spelling** (where children select common letter(s) to represent sounds) is an important step toward conventional spelling. Children must test their hypotheses to see if they are on the right track. Early on, if a child spells the number 8 as "ate," we consider it progress because it shows that the child is attuned to the common spelling patterns for a sound, in this case /long a/. Later, we expect very sophisticated

knowledge about the spelling of sounds. Using the /long a/ example, we expect them to realize the many different ways it can be spelled: ate, weight, aim, say, they.

Accomplishments for Composing and Spelling[3]

KINDERGARTEN	FIRST GRADE	SECOND GRADE	THIRD GRADE
• Uses phonemic awareness and letter knowledge to spell independently (invented or creative spelling) • Builds a repertoire of some conventionally spelled words • Shows awareness of distinction between "kid writing" and conventional orthography • Writes own name (first and last) and the first names of some friends or classmates • Can write most letters and some words when they are dictated	• Spells correctly three- and four-letter short vowel words • Uses invented spelling/phonics-based knowledge to spell independently, when necessary • Shows spelling consciousness or sensitivity to conventional spelling • Uses basic punctuation and capitalization • Composes fairly readable first drafts using appropriate parts of the writing process (some attention to planning, drafting, rereading for meaning, and self-correction) • Produces various types of compositions (e.g., stories, journals)	• Correctly spells previously studied words and spelling patterns in own writing • Shows sensitivity to formal language patterns in place of oral language patterns at appropriate spots in own writing (e.g., quotes for speech) • Makes reasonable judgments about what to include in writing • Discusses ways to clarity and refine writing of self and others, and applies suggestions to own writing with aid • With aid in organizing, writes well-structured reports • Attends to spelling, mechanics, and presentation for final products • Produces various types of compositions (e.g., stories, reports, correspondence)	• Correctly spells previously studied words and spelling patterns in own writing • Begins to incorporate literary words and language patterns in own writing • With some guidance, uses all steps of the writing process in writing compositions and reports • Combines information from multiple sources in writing reports • Discusses own and peers' writing with peers • Independently reviews products for spelling, mechanics, and presentation • Produces various written works (e.g., reports, "published" books) in various formats including multimedia

A complete writing program attends equally to conventions of writing and to the writing process.

These accomplishments make it clear that, by the end of third grade, children are expected to write for a variety of purposes, and that their compositions need to employ high standards of spelling and mechanics. They also suggest that children must develop expertise with the conventional aspects of writing as well as the writing process. While the steps in the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, and publication) are important, equally important is the development of "writerly dispositions": Young children must learn to think like writers, to think tnat they are writers, and to believe that they have ideas to share with others.[4]

Instruction for the Youngest Writers

In kindergarten and early in first grade, children's composing efforts are personal narratives (stories about themselves).

The good writing described in these accomplishments does not suddenly appear at the end of third grade. It reflects the presence of frequent, often daily, writing from kindergarten through third grade.

Activities for composing

Children's initial writing experiences begin in kindergarten and preschool when they tell their ideas to an adult who writes them down. Sometimes the dictation occurs in groups, sometimes one on one. The content can be based on a unique experience, a common experience such as a trip to a store, or responses to a book that was read aloud.

Books with predictable patterns are very useful as a stimulus for group books. After hearing *Are You my Mother?*[a] one group of first graders wrote: "Once there was a spider that could not find its mom. Then he met a lizard and said, 'Are you my mom?' and he said, 'No.' Then he saw a shadow and it was his mom."[5] When the charts—including the daily news or morning message—and big books written by the class are part of library centers, children gravitate to the materials, rereading their contributions and those of their classmates.

Early in kindergarten, children write messages in the form of journals. Initially, some children draw their entries or represent words by their initial letters. But throughout kindergarten and into first grade, children increasingly attempt phonetic spelling. By mid-year of first grade, most children will be writing in fairly decipherable text, as Ryan's journal entry indicates: "Thes is a trou storey. wen I Was Playing BasBall I het a homrun."[6]

Activities for spelling

Phonetic spelling—where children produce the letters for sounds that they hear—is the first step on the pathway of good spelling. Teachers use phonetic spellings as springboards to extend children's knowledge of spelling-sound patterns.

As teachers write children's messages in group contexts, they talk about the spelling of words and the conventions of writing such as capitalization. By the middle or end of kindergarten, children take turns writing some of the words in the message. Teachers also interact with children about the spellings of their compositions. For example, Ryan's teacher might have talked with him about the spellings of words (*this* and *hit)* in the following manner: "You've spelled 'was' and 'playing' correctly. But look at 'this' and 'hit'. There's one sound that you need to listen for in each of the words—the middle one. Stretch out the word 'this': /th-i-i-i-i-s/. Now stretch out the word 'hit': /h-i-i-i-i-t/. What vowel other than 'e' might it be?"

By glancing through children's journals, teachers can identify the sound-spelling elements requiring attention. Elements that are challenging to several students, such as whether the middle vowel in *pin* and *bin* is spelled with an *i* or an *e*, become the basis for class lessons. The words challenging to individuals can be collected in personal "word banks," and words that are used often by many children can be displayed prominently on a classroom "word wall," organized alphabetically and topically.

Instruction for Older Primary Children

Activities for composing

As children progress and begin to master the fundamentals of spelling and text organization, nothing improves writing faster than providing lots of opportunities to write.

Reading response journals, where children can write their reactions and summarize what they have read, connect reading and writing. Teachers support children's learning with response journals by asking children questions that extend written responses. After reading *My First American Friend,*[b] a second grader had written: "Life was hard for Saruna because she had lived somewhere else." The teacher asked the child to elaborate with the question, "Why does that make it harder for her?" The child thought about it and then added: "Saruna had a hard time because she was from China and looked different."[7]

Writing "realistic" narratives—where children create stories with characters, settings, conflicts, and solutions—is enhanced by writing in response journals. Once children begin to study the motives or feelings of a character such as Saruna, they begin to integrate these elements into their own stories.

Primary-level children enjoy acquiring new information about a wide range of topics—nature, historical figures, and mythical characters. Children's ability to integrate information on a topic from several sources does not magically happen. Teachers guide children in refining topics, identifying sources and the critical information within them, and organizing information.

One teacher of a third-grade class had each child pick an animal.[8] Children wrote ideas from books on note cards. Next, children used felt pens to highlight particular categories of ideas (e.g., yellow for ideas about animals' habitats, pink for ideas about the babies of the species, green for ideas about food, with orange and blue left for new categories). The teacher then worked with small groups of children to identify the main concept behind the ideas highlighted with the same color.

Writers' Workshop

Writers' workshop is a popular context for combining lessons in composition and writing conventions (spelling, grammar, and usage such as quotation marks).[9] Lessons give children occasions to learn about all aspects of the writing cycle—planning, writing, getting feedback, revising, editing, and publishing. Peer interactions are an important part of writers' workshop, where children read one another's compositions and give feedback. The interaction occurs through writer's chair where individuals share work in progress, and in pairs or small groups interacting at different points in the writing cycle.

Extending phonetic to conventional spelling

In addition to the formal spelling program content, teachers can assist children in taking responsibility for conventional spelling by having them check

spelling in their daily work. In writers' workshop, for example, children often have an editing checklist and are asked to proofread their writing for words where the spelling looks wrong. They can also add personal words that are misspelled in their compositions to their weekly spelling list. Meeting standards for correct spelling is especially important when students progress to the publication stage in writers' workshop.

Instruction for English Language Learners

Writing has been found to be a particularly critical medium for involving English language learners in literacy.

When given many occasions for writing and when phonetic spelling is used as a bridge to conventional spelling, English language learners can, over time, perform at levels comparable to native English speakers.[10] Luis, a native Spanish-speaking child, demonstrated a dramatic improvement in writing after participating in writers' workshop. When topics were prescribed and spelling and handwriting were the chief grading criteria, Luis wrote sparsely and described his writing this way: "I cannot write the words correctly.... I just don't know how." In a classroom that was part of the Optimal Learning Environment project (OLE)[11] where writing experiences began with children's personal narratives, Luis wrote prolifically, beginning with the crises in his neighborhood.

Creating dialogue in journals where an adult responds to the child's entries can give English language learners a model for English forms and the chance to communicate important messages. For example, if a child wrote "I am three journal," the adult might write back, "Yes, you are beginning your third journal. Congratulations!"[12]

Instruction for Children Who Are Struggling Readers and Writers

Writing messages improves struggling readers' attention to relations between sounds and letters and, consequently, word recognition fluency.

Composing messages can be a means for struggling readers to develop the beginning reading skills that challenge them most—phonemic awareness and letter-sound knowledge. Writing requires attention to individual sounds and children's knowledge is expressed concretely in their spellings. This information is useful to teachers in designing lessons that move children to word recognition fluency and conventional spelling.

The positive effects of phonetic spelling on reading were demonstrated in a study of first graders.[13] The project compared children's progress in classrooms that encouraged phonetic spelling with those that encouraged conventional spelling in compositions. Children using phonetic spelling wrote longer compositions and performed better on spelling and word analysis tasks than children using conventional spelling. The encouragement to use phonetic spelling made the biggest difference for children who were struggling the most in reading at the beginning of first grade. Phonetic spelling gives struggling

readers the confidence that they can attempt words that they have not seen or written before. When teachers and children use these attempts to clarify and expand knowledge, children progress as readers and writers.

EVERY CHILD A READER: COMPANION READINGS

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CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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This topic is part of the series *Every Child a Reader* by E.H. Hiebert, P.D. Pearson, B.M. Taylor, V. Richardson, & S.G. Paris of the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA).

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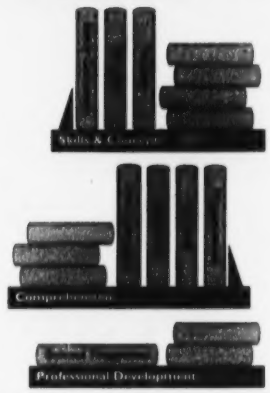
EVERY CHILD A READER

TOPIC 7

Engagement and Interest in Reading



From the earliest storybook reading with an adult and the first proudly scribbled message, children enjoy reading and writing because of the social communication and signs of cognitive competence these activities provide. The key to attaining and using literacy, even when sustained effort and attention are needed, is the sense of personal pride that children feel when they succeed.

For children to become lifelong readers, they must be engaged in reading and writing as meaningful and enjoyable activities.

The ultimate goal of any reading program is to inspire children to use their literacy skills throughout their lives as tools for enjoyment, learning, and communication.[1] In order to attain that goal, children must be interested and engaged in what they are doing and feel a sense of pride in their accomplishments.

Children's involvement in reading and writing indicates their engagement: how eager are they to read and write new texts? Interest, variety, and relevance all play a role in engaging children in reading. When children are interested in what they are reading, they actively pursue reading and have fun with it. In order for children to become lifelong readers, they must engage in reading and writing as relevant tasks—the means through which they can pursue their own personal interests in dogs, dinosaurs, dolls, or a hundred other topics.

Either the adults in children's families or teachers can be the source for children's engagement in reading.[2] The best situation is when these two groups work together. Even when families have been active in promoting literacy, teachers are essential if children's accomplishments are to be integrated into school literacy. Teachers are also the source for ensuring that children's accomplishments at school are shared with their families and that school reading accomplishments are extended in homes.

Some children will depend on the school to learn about the rich reservoir of knowledge and enjoyment that literacy provides. For other children who have models of literacy among adults in their homes, their level of engagement also depends on the literacy environments of the classroom. Teachers are leaders in connecting the literacies of home and school and in creating classrooms where children thrive as readers and writers.

Accomplishments for Engagement in Reading[3]

KINDERGARTEN	FIRST GRADE	SECOND GRADE	THIRD GRADE
• Asks adults to read to him/her • Listens attentively to books read to class by teachers • Has some favorite books and authors	• Creates own written text to share with others • Reads on one's own for enjoyment • Identifies favorite books • Takes pride in ability to read aloud	• Enjoys reading silently at school • Seeks opportunities to read independently at home • Enjoys choral reading, poems, and dramatizations • Visits library and checks out materials	• Reads voluntarily for own purposes • Responds to text with oral presentations, book reports, journal writing, and dramatization • Identifies favorite genres and topics for voluntary reading • Helps other children learn to read in cooperative and reciprocal arrangements

Engagement in reading—while rarely thought of as a reading skill—is prominent among the accomplishments for primary-level reading achievement. Cultivating interests and topics for reading is as much a part of becoming an independent third-grade reader as the skills and strategies of word recognition and comprehension.

Classrooms That Connect Reading at Home and School

For children to become truly engaged readers and writers, connections between schools and families are essential. These connections are critical for two reasons. First, when the literacy knowledge that children have acquired in their homes and communities is recognized in school, children are able to draw on their store of knowledge to complete school tasks. Equally important is the path from school to home: Children who apply reading and writing skills learned at school in their homes and communities are much more likely to be completely engaged in literacy.

By bringing the literacy events and materials of home into the classroom, children and families are recognized for their efforts.

When schools and teachers recognize the aspirations of families and efforts devoted to children's reading acquisition, they take an important first step in ensuring engagement. For example, many families work hard to teach the alphabet song to their young children. Featuring children's renditions of the alphabet song in share and tell during the first month of Head Start, preschool, or kindergarten lets children and their families know that their efforts are appreciated. Incorporating the community's written language—street signs, container labels, and business logos—lets children know that learning to read connects to things they already know. Even reading orally familiar books from their homes has proven to be an important home-to-school link for young children.

By extending school reading and writing events into homes, such as daily book reading, children develop lifelong reading habits.

Many schools have home reading programs which encourage children to read at home daily. Such established efforts can be enhanced in other ways such as monthly newsletters that summarize the 10 favorite books of the class or the new publications by class members that have been added to the school library.

The support of schools in ensuring that children have books and a commitment to read during extended vacations is especially critical. Toward the end of the school year, children can write postcards to themselves about their goals for summer reading. The postcards can be mailed to the children at different points over the summer. Children can also create posters about summertime reading to be posted in local stores as a reminder to read.

By sharing literacy resources in communities with families, schools aid in increasing children's literacy engagement.

Some families benefit from information on ways to promote engagement and interaction around literacy activities with their children. Parents can be coached about shared reading with beginning readers: how to share a book, ask questions, and provide feedback as they discuss stories.[4] They can also be involved in their children's learning through parent-teacher communication journals.

Schools also serve as the liaisons for resources within communities aimed at supporting family literacy. Family literacy programs, such as Even Start, can share with families how to respond to children's interests and to express positive expectations and values for literacy. Many museums provide excellent programs that support reading as families explore exhibits. Libraries offer activities such as story reading that spark children's interest in ideas and books. Summer programs and materials (including book lists to guide families in trips to the library) offered by governmental agencies and other organizations can sustain reading habits built in schools.[5]

Classrooms That Engage Children in Reading

A recent survey of highly successful literacy teachers showed that they shared 7 practices, practices that enhance children's competence and engagement in reading and writing.

The results of surveys given to primary-level teachers who were identified by reading supervisors as successful in teaching children to read and write are summarized in a table on the next page.[6] As the asterisks indicate, four of these successful teachers' practices are the focus of other topics of *Every Child a Reader.* These four practices deal with the competence of children as readers and writers. Competence is central to engagement in that struggling readers are less likely to read if it is tedious.

The three additional practices—literate environments, diverse activities, and engaging instruction—point to another aspect of engagement, the component of interest and motivation. Many children can read but choose not to. In classrooms of highly successful literacy teachers, children's interest in reading and writing is piqued through the environment, diverse activities, and engaging instruction.

7 Practices of Highly Successful Literacy Teachers[6]

1. Providing classroom literacy events in which all children participate, regardless of abilities, along with additional support for struggling readers*
2. Designing literate classroom environments
3. Modeling and teaching of decoding and comprehension processes**
4. Creating extensive, diverse reading opportunities for students
5. Teaching students writing processes such as planning, drafting, and revising***
6. Providing engaging literacy instruction so that children are eager to read and write
7. Monitoring children's progress in reading and writing****

Relevant information in *Every Child A Reader*:

* English Language Learners and Struggling Reader sections of all topics, and Topic 8

** Topics 3, 4, and 5

*** Topic 6

**** Accomplishments section of all topics

A literate environment characterizes the classrooms of highly successful literacy teachers.

The classrooms of highly successful literacy teachers are full of books and writing materials and children's compositions and illustrations about favorite books are prominently displayed. Children's contributions may also be visible in the signs that signal places or chores such as the gerbil's feeding schedule. The classroom has an inviting place for reading books, including displays of favorite or focus books that have been chosen by teacher and children.

The literate environment is evident in the encouragement children get to make attempts even when they're uncertain of the answer. Children are not praised in a patronizing way for these efforts but they know that their teacher focuses on what these attempts show about reading and writing.[7] For example, when a child reads *hope* for *hop*, the teacher may acknowledge the child's effort to apply information from a lesson on the silent *e* but will ask the child to think about the meaning of the text.

There are extensive, diverse reading opportunities in the classrooms of highly successful literacy teachers.

When children have ample opportunities for reading on their own in self-chosen books, their engagement in reading increases. Special book centers, free reading time, library visits, and puppets of favorite characters are some of the ways in which effective teachers invite children to read.

Some children are highly interested in reading when there is information to be gained, but may be put off by a preponderance of stories as part of reading instruction. In the first wave of literature-based reading instruction in the mid-1980s, literature was often equated with stories. Recently, schools and publishers have attempted to incorporate more informational text into reading instruction. The amount of good informational literature about nature is steadily increasing and is very interesting to many young children.

Highly successful teachers provide engaging literacy instruction, ensuring that children are eager to read and write.

Instruction takes many different forms in the classrooms of highly successful literacy teachers.[8] Teacher-led discussions and lessons are a staple in these classrooms. Some of these teacher-led events encompass the entire classroom but there are also consistent times when children, especially struggling readers, meet in teacher-led, small groups. These groups may change in their composition over a term but struggling readers benefit from consistent instruction from their teachers in small groups.

There are also numerous occasions for independent reading and writing, times when children can read and write in a sustained manner and apply what has been taught. Many literacy activities motivate children by pairing them with partners. Children pay attention better and monitor strategies more when they are reading to a partner or coaching another child than when they read independently.[9]

Instruction for English Language Learners

The success of English language learners in attaining the goal of independent English reading and writing by the end of third grade depends on high levels of engagement as readers and writers.

English language learners' engagement is fostered when classroom libraries and teachers' read-aloud events highlight books on the cultures of English language learners in a school. Engagement with books is the primary means whereby English language learners will increase their vocabularies and comprehension.[10] Lists of books on experiences of various immigrant groups to America can be found in professional publications or obtained from professional organizations.[11]

Connecting to the literacies of their communities increases the likelihood that English language learners will come to see the value of English literacy in their daily lives. Getting English language learners to identify ways in which reading and writing are used in their homes and communities can be helpful. Letters written to and received from family in other countries; manuals and magazines in first languages and in English; favorite books, applications, and lists—artifacts of these reading and writing events can be featured in the classroom.[12]

Instruction for Children Who Are Struggling Readers

Reading instruction should build on children's interests and involve them in using reading in their lives and communities.

Literacy is not engaging when children spend their time copying letters and words in isolation or when reading is regarded as saying all the words in print correctly. Excessive drills and worksheets may turn children off to reading. Teachers can prevent this by using reading and writing as means of exploring and expressing children's interests.

In the Early Literacy Project,[13] teachers engage children who are identified as at risk in literacy activities from the beginning of their school careers. After experimenting with different approaches and topics to stimulate informational writing, teachers found that the best topics for children were ones on which

they were "experts." A child whose journal is full of references to his pets might be encouraged to write about the care of pets and qualities of different pets. A rollerblading enthusiast might write about equipment and safeguards for the sport and favorite spots in town to skate. Children develop areas of expertise through reading magazine articles and books. Youngsters classified as at-risk for failure often make great strides in reading and writing achievement—even on standardized tests—when they are engaged in literacy activities. Equally important, children become interested in literacy.

EVERY CHILD A READER: COMPANION READINGS

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This topic is part of the series *Every Child a Reader* by E.H. Hiebert, P.D. Pearson, B.M. Taylor, V. Richardson, & S.G. Paris of the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA).

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EVERY CHILD A READER

TOPIC 8

School-Wide Reading Programs

In schools that are successful in fostering high levels of reading achievement, all adults in the school work together on the reading program, build systematic program links across the grades, accept responsibility for all children, and closely monitor students' progress.

School-level activities contribute to student learning.

The schools that children attend make a difference in their reading achievement.[1] In schools that draw on the same communities and have the same resources, the achievement patterns of children at the end of third grade can be quite different. In one school, the majority of children will have attained the goal of independent reading, while in the second school, many children will leave third grade as struggling readers.

What are the differences between these schools? For two decades, we have known that effective schools exhibit a consistent set of features: high expectations for all students, agreement on goals among school personnel, and increased time on tasks.[2]

More recently, we have learned that high reading achievement is found in schools which have reading programs with clear and consistent connections from classroom to classroom.[3] This clarity and consistency characterizes both the program for students (what and how they are taught) and the support that teachers receive to help them implement the reading program. Clarity and consistency from grade to grade are especially critical. Consistency across grade levels does not mean that content is the same across grade levels, but that the activities of one grade build on the activities of the previous grade.

Clarity and consistency only occur when there is communication and collaboration among teachers, families, and other school personnel.

For every child to become a reader, collaboration among all adults in the school must be extensive. For many children, the programs that are put into place as a result of planning and coordination are sufficient for them to become independent readers by the end of third grade. Other children, though, require additional supports in the form of **interventions** (instructional efforts focused on a particular set of goals during a particular period of time). The success of the children who struggle most with reading depends on a consistent school-wide reading program, including coordination and communication between the standard program and any special interventions designed explicitly for these children.

Shared Reading Accomplishments

A consistent program is defined by a shared perspective on what needs to happen during particular periods in children's school careers to ensure reading success.

A successful school-wide reading program is not identical in every grade, but the parts need to fit together to help readers develop a rich and balanced set of reading strategies. Observations of reading instruction in a school[4] without a coherent program showed significant variations in the content and experiences children had from one grade to the next throughout the primary years—the target years for reading acquisition.

In kindergarten, children participated in holistic activities like journal writing and shared reading with very little specific instruction on phonemic awareness or letter-sound matching. As first graders, the same children were expected to participate in a highly structured program that required competent phonics analysis. The second-grade instruction required completing numerous workbook exercises, rather than extended reading and writing activities that children need to consolidate all the skills they are learning in word recognition, comprehension, spelling, and composition. In third grade, children read and discussed literature.

Clearly, this school's literacy program lacked consistency and clarity in its reading program, which limited students' opportunities to build on earlier learning as they progressed from kindergarten through third grade. The children whose accuracy and fluency in word recognition were not highly developed had few occasions for feedback on existing strategies or the acquisition of new strategies. While some children may go unharmed by a lack of clarity and consistency in reading instruction, struggling readers will suffer from inconsistent programs in the primary years.

Focusing on a set of accomplishments such as those presented in Topics 1 to 7 of this series illustrates the form that a shared perspective of children's reading acquisition can take.

Programs change across the primary grades to reflect the experiences children need at different points of time to master key tasks. These changes, however, need to complement one another, contributing to the creation of successful readers. Throughout *Every Child a Reader*, the accomplishments from *Preventing Reading Difficulties*[5] were used to illustrate the tasks that confront children in their movement toward independent reading. Many states have established frameworks of accomplishments[6] as have districts around the country. Such frameworks can be useful as a place for teachers in a school or district to discuss the connections within their primary reading programs. Frameworks of accomplishments within these documents, including *Preventing Reading Difficulties*, were never meant to be viewed as mandates for instruction. However, these documents can be valuable as starting points for discussions in schools and school districts about the learning and instruction that students need to ensure independent reading by the end of third grade.

Regular Opportunities for Teacher Collaboration

Collaboration among teachers, which is the foundation of a consistent reading program, is initiated and sustained by systemic effort on the part of school leaders.

A clear understanding of a school's shared goals is the cornerstone to successful reading programs. This understanding can only be achieved through regular dialogue between teachers. Schools that are highly successful in promoting children's reading build on their shared view of reading as teachers, principals, and other school personnel design instruction, choose assessments, and identify the foci of their ongoing professional development.

Teachers agree on the core content of the reading program. Schools should have atmospheres where teachers can talk freely as colleagues about their practices, beliefs, challenges, and successes. They also need to explore the nature of reading programs in their area, and look closely at programs that have been successful with students similar to their own. Whether the teachers in a school select an external program to use or develop a "homegrown" program, they need time to establish what works with their students.

Monitoring student achievement provides critical information. Although testing programs are cross-sectional and tend to focus on a particular grade level, teachers should view student development longitudinally and across grade levels. Assessment should be aligned with the agreed-upon goals. These goals should be a primary consideration when assessing reading growth.

Professional development is crucial to school change. Whether teachers select a prepackaged program or create their own, opportunities for professional learning are critical to the process.[7] Professional learning within a successful school is long term and requires extensive follow-through. It involves all teachers in the school, encourages collegiality, incorporates current knowledge from well-designed research, and involves adequate funds for materials and substitute teachers so teachers have time for the learning experiences that they need. Professional development should be aligned with the established goals for students. Finally, professional development should involve a continual analysis of how it and the reading program work in relationship to the school's overall goals.

Provision of Interventions for Struggling Readers

Students who struggle to learn to read benefit from interventions, usually in the form of small group or tutoring programs.

No matter how good it is, the standard reading program in a school is not likely to meet the needs of all children. One study, for example, suggests that perhaps one-quarter of the at-risk students undergoing whole-class training in phonological awareness gain little insight into the structure of the spoken words, much less into reading.[8] When that happens, schools and teachers should have alternative programs or interventions available for students who will otherwise fall farther and farther behind. All available evidence points to the need for these interventions to include intensive small group or tutorial support. When interventions have been conducted with the entire class, their

efficacy for struggling readers has not been comparable to small group or tutorial efforts.[9]

Primary level teachers working in conjunction with teachers who have specialties such as Title I have several routes available to them when implementing interventions. Support can be acquired through a national effort. Teachers can read about and visit smaller-scale efforts that have been implemented in only a few sites but whose successful outcomes have been documented. Or teachers can develop a "homegrown" model, capitalizing on the strengths and addressing the challenges of their particular school.

Even when a national model is implemented, its expression within a school often takes on a homegrown character.[10] Successful implementation of any intervention whatever its source, requires extensive involvement of all adults in the school.

Recent years have witnessed an explosion of high quality, effective interventions for primary-level students.

The group of interventions that are presented here is by no means exhaustive. The aim is to provide a sampling of the primary types of interventions that are available. These include tutoring efforts conducted by specially trained teachers or by volunteers; small-group efforts conducted by classroom teachers or by Title 1, special education, and bilingual teachers; and school-wide restructuring of the reading program, including the implementation of tutoring for some children. The outcomes of all of these interventions have been described in the research literature. Their level of dissemination, however, differs greatly. In some cases, extensive dissemination of the models has occurred; in others, the efforts have remained at a local site. If you are interested in any of these programs, please consult the original sources and investigate them in depth.

TEACHER-STUDENT RATIO	MODEL	DESCRIPTION
School-wide	Success for All[11]	K–6: 90 minutes of reading a day for all children in ability-grouped classes of 15–20; additional individual tutoring is provided for a portion of the students.
Small-group	Early Intervention in Reading (EIR)[12]	A classroom teacher provides 20 minutes of extra instruction for 5–7 struggling readers in first or second grade
	Restructured Chapter 1[13]	Title I or special education teachers work with 3–4 children daily for particular periods of time, adding or "graduating" children from instruction on the basis of quarterly assessments.
Individual tutorials	Reading Recovery[14]	Specially trained teachers work with first graders individually in half-hour daily tutoring sessions for at least a school term.
	Book Buddies[15]	Tutors are volunteers who meet several times a week with first and second grade children. Tutors are supervised by trained reading teachers.

The nature of the intervention or group of interventions that work in a school will be a function of the profile of a school and the backgrounds of its teachers.

In each of these programs there are agreed-upon goals for what children need to learn at particular points in learning to read. In most efforts, the instructional texts are carefully identified. In schools where substantial number of children require additional support to become independent readers by the end of third grade, several different interventions may need to be considered. For example, an intensive effort of specially trained teachers working with a portion of the first graders may need to be augmented with small-group instruction by classroom teachers.

Further, the efforts of classroom teachers in the primary grades should be rethought. For example, if a tutoring effort has been effective with a portion of the first grade, a volunteer program might need to be initiated for second graders who are new to the school in second grade.

Another factor requiring consideration in choosing an intervention is teachers' backgrounds in teaching reading. The nature of support that is provided in different interventions differs substantially, influencing the number of children who are served over a period of time as well as the levels of reading that children achieve. Whatever route is taken, it is important that all teachers in a given school are aware of and collaborate with those who are developing and implementing these programs.

Every child can become a reader when schools, communities, and families work together in building skills and concepts, comprehension foundations, and engagement in reading and writing.

Creating and implementing school-wide reading programs requires teamwork, time, and commitment to a shared vision of successful reading among teachers and school personnel. Teachers who understand children's reading as a series of developmental accomplishments that build on each other are sensitive to the integrated nature of reading. The key features of effective reading programs include:

- a firm foundation on oral language and communication,
- extensive opportunities to practice phonics analysis and word recognition,
- early instruction on letter names and sounds, phonemic awareness, and concepts about print,
- repeated use of high frequency words in authentic reading and writing activities,
- scaffolded instruction with comprehension strategies,
- many opportunities to write for meaningful purposes and audiences, and
- classroom activities that engage children's interests and support positive self-perceptions of their growing abilities as readers.

It is not easy to implement a school-wide program combining these features, but when such programs are created by teachers and administrators and delivered in successive grades, they provide consistent support for the development of independent, life-long readers.

EVERY CHILD A READER: COMPANION READINGS

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